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NEW STATESMAN

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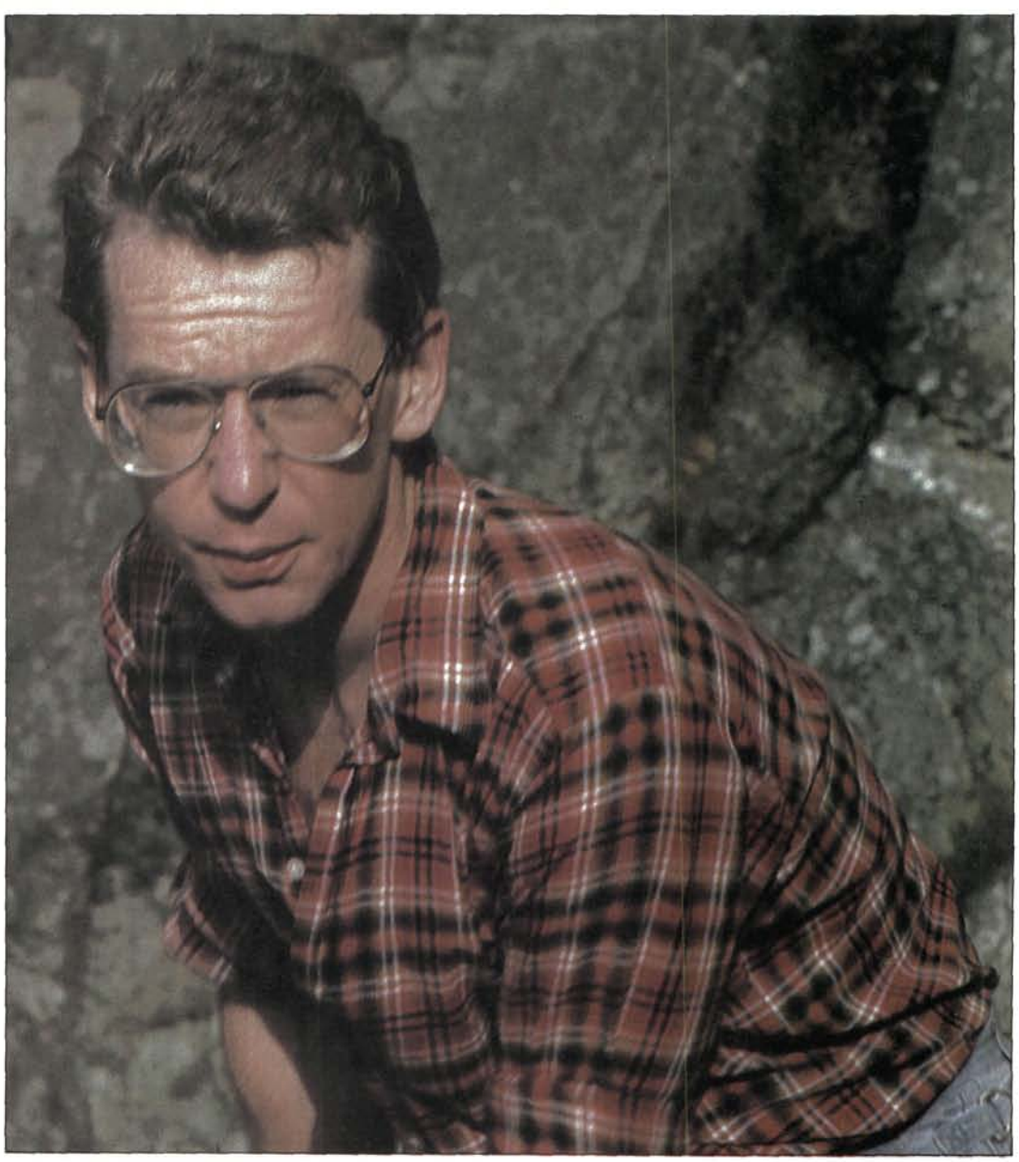

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John Lloyd on why the miners love Arthur

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NEW STATESMAN

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CONTENTS

FEATURES

Denis MacShane: Seoul Diary 4
Ben Pimlott: The Labour Party's muddle over re-nationalisation 5
Upfront 6
Edward Pearce: NHS — the Tories on a losing streak 8
Duncan Campbell: Zircon — how Kinnock caved in 10
John Lloyd: Why Scargill is still top of the polls 14
Yvonne Roberts: The debut of a thoroughly nasty New Woman 16
Hilary Wainwright: Learning from Europe on campaigns for shorter working hours 18
Patrick Curry: The illiberal Liberals of Tower Hamlets — caught in a storm over racism 19
Paul Highfield: A behind-the-lines view of the food wars in Ethiopia and Eritrea 20

ESSAY

Melissa Benn: The looming war between feminists over what to think and do about pornography 21

ARTS

Judith Williamson: Horror Films 24
Victoria Radin: *Dreams of San Francisco* and *Waiting for Godot* 25
Felicity Sparrow: Video at the London Film Festival 25
Hugo Williams: Television 26
Harriett Gilbert: Comment: The value of art 27

BOOKS

Marek Kohn: Simon Watney on Aids 28
Paul Hallam: Gregory Woods' *Articulate Flesh* 29
Clive Ponting: Philip Agee's *On the Run* 30
Liz Heron: Natalia Ginzburg looks at relationships 30
Michèle Roberts: Rebecca West on families 31
Dennis O'Driscoll: Poem 31
Mark Fisher: Politics and the media 32
Andrew Clements: Musical biographies 32
Nick Caistor: *Cuzcatlan* by Manlio Argueta 33

FUN

Weekend competition 38
Weekend crossword 38
John Minnion: Take Me to Your Leader 39
Chess: George Botterill 39
This England 39

PLUS

Roger Woddis 4
Christian Clark 23
Letters 35

NEXT WEEK

Our bumper Christmas/New Year *triple* issue — see p.15 for details

After the summit

FORTY YEARS is not a long time in politics. Most of us cannot remember a time when Europe was not utterly divided at the Elbe between an east Europe under Soviet hegemony and a west Europe under the power (cosily described, usually, as the 'umbrella') of the United States. This division often seemed permanent, but in fact throughout history 'Europe' has been shaped and re-shaped as the balance of power has shifted; and the significance of the summit deal is that it signals the end of a bi-polar Europe.

This is a historic moment, then, to promote an alternative vision of a Europe in which real political imagination could render NATO's — and Britain's — nuclear pretensions irrelevant precisely because the *political* divisions have been brought to an end — a Europe, in other words, beyond both detente *and* cold war.

Think back to the deployment of cruise and Pershings in the early 1980s. NATO governments then raised the spectre of the Soviet SS20 to reinforce the doctrine of deterrence and to provide tangible guarantees — in the shape of these intermediate-range weapons — of a continuing US nuclear involvement in Europe. The purpose was primarily political, not military.

The attempt to 'recouple' west Europe and the United States, through the presence of US nuclear weapons on European soil, has failed. But just as their deployment was highly symbolic, so too is their removal. The circumstances of that removal — with even Mrs Thatcher obliged publicly to kiss and make friends with General Secretary Gorbachev — brings finally to an end the incredible notion that underpins deterrence — that the Soviets have been restrained from invading western Europe only by the nuclear presence of the United States. Moreover, the military blocs themselves — NATO and the Warsaw Pact — are beginning to dissolve as the bi-polar thaw continues. No one with any sense really believes the Russians are coming.

Politics abhors a vacuum, and even now powerful forces are being deployed to fill the power gap in west Europe. Governments are actively pursuing a political and military integration which takes as given the continued division of Europe along the Elbe — the frontier, as Mrs Thatcher still sees it, between the 'free world' and the not-quite-so-evil empire. The West European Union has reaffirmed its commitment to nuclear deterrence and collective security. The WEU specifically endorsed the contribution that British and French nuclear power could make to the defence of Europe, and actually envisaged the need 'to concert our policies on crises *outside* Europe insofar as they may affect our security interests' (our emphasis). We have even seen the first initiative taken within this political framework: the decisions to send minesweepers to the Gulf from various European countries and West Germany's transfer of ships to the Mediterranean.

An independent west European military power, with its own interventionist role to play in the third world, is gradually being built. This development is being encouraged by European defence industries which currently face a slump in their export markets in the impoverished third world. They are pushing for more joint high-technology projects in west Europe, which would be very hard for any individual country to cancel.

This new west European defence entity is predicated upon the continuing division of Europe. Soviet troops and arms in east Europe legitimise its development. Even though we are entering a phase of detente in east-west relations, and western military interests are shifting south, a new military power in west Europe will make permanent again the confrontation along the Elbe; and at any time, detente may revert, as it did in the late 1970s, back to cold war.

It is vital therefore to invite Europeans to consider a radically different scenario — that of a nuclear-free Europe in which the nations of east and west coexist in a looser relationship. We must call the east of Europe into political existence in order to redress the balance of the west. This will be difficult for a labour movement which has traditionally found the very existence of 'actually existing socialism' in east Europe so embarrassing politically that it prefers to ignore the Soviet satellite states — and thus, their peoples. But these states must be made freer of Soviet hegemony, just as west Europe is (to some degree unwillingly) being freed of US hegemony, if there is to be real peace on both sides of the divide.

This depends in part on the government-to-government dialogue between the west and Gorbachev. But the left in west Europe should support *glasnost* from below to complement *glasnost* from above through wide-ranging discussions with the growing social movements in eastern states about the changes which are necessary for a coming together.

As the early 1980s showed, demands for a nuclear-free and pluralist Europe have real resonance among the peoples of the West, if not with their governments. If we are to have *military* disarmament — nuclear and conventional — we must first have what the east Europeans call 'political disarmament'. □

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DIARY

Seoul

Arriving in South Korea from Britain I gingerly asked the blue-suited Rotary Club Korean businessman on my plane for his views on the strike wave that rocked Korea during July and August. He nodded enthusiastically and said it was very necessary. 'The workers have been exploited for far too long. It's only fair that they get proper wages. It's all part of our democratisation process.' It seems unfair that democracies (for example, our own) cannot go through a democratisation process. This appears to be a privilege exclusively reserved for dictatorships. The zest with which Koreans are taking part in the political opening created by the presidential contest scheduled for next week is impressive. Workers, academics, and journalists who only four months ago kept mum for fear of losing their jobs and worse are now openly meeting, talking, publishing, organising and going to mass meetings for the opposition candidates at which an attendance of under 200,000 is reckoned a failure.

○

The usual explanation for Korea's drift to democracy is the Olympic Games due to be held in Seoul next summer, meant to symbolise Korea's entry into the world of developed nations. The military will step down, the police will put away their tear gas, and a strong free enterprise pro-American conservative government will take over.

We'll see. The forces currently unleashing themselves may be a good bit stronger than is realised. There is a passionate Korean nationalism which has been chafing under the yoke first of Japanese occupation for the first 45 years of the century and then as a client of America since 1950. The absurd backwardness of the Kim Il Sum dynasty in North Korea means that communism holds no attractions for Korean left democrats. The freedoms for which they call are the classic nostrums — freedom of assembly, of elections, of the media, of travel, of trade union organisation.

○

Although neither the opposition nor the military government would care to admit it, the main impression one has of South Korea is that it is a state which obeys two classic Marxist dictums. The first is Brecht's old line about 'Grub first, then comes politics' while the second is that the Korean dictators have looked around the world for a model of development and decided that Stalin's forced industrialisation of Russia in the 1930s was the best one to follow. The official propaganda boasts of five-year plans, each following the other in smooth succession, with the state controlling investment and every aspect of economic life. In an instantly out-of-date supplement on privatisation the *Observer* published a week after the great stock market crash was a colour photo of Nigel Lawson with the fatuous quote: 'The business of government is not the government of business.' He should try that line on the South Koreans who have shifted their country from an agricultural wasteland with a per capita income of £250 a year into the top league of industrial powers through 25 years of the most detailed intervention in the economy.

○

Two of the British success stories of the Thatcher years have been Amstrad computers and Reebok sports shoes which have placed Union Jacks on the feet of every jogger, tennis player and aerobic devotee in North America, Japan and much of Europe. Yet Amstrad computers and Reebok shoes are Korean products. The marketing genius may be British but the profits are going East. Moreover thanks to rigorous exchange controls the money has stayed in the country.

Seoul is quite unlike the cities of the other Asian export-driven economies — Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore — with which Korea is usually lumped. Perhaps because it is much further north it looks more like a dumpy north European city — I was reminded of Oslo or Aberdeen. It is clean and modern, with estates of well-built flats in the suburbs, an underground system that is cleaner, cheaper, and safer to use than London's and streets packed with shoppers. The price for this bustling modernisation has been high — the total suppression of political freedom and trade union rights. Pitifully low wages, compulsory six- or seven-day working weeks, and no safety standards have helped Korea accumulate the capital to pay for the impressive-looking infrastructure that will greet visitors to the Olympics.

○

Along with the political liberalisation the government is slowly increasing domestic demand; already complaints are beginning about Seoul being choked with traffic, confirming the old adage that you cannot build an automobile economy on bicycle wages. The most interesting development to watch will be whether the workers who erupted into action in July and August consolidate their gains. They won handsome pay rises and the promise of recognition from companies that had always resisted trade union recognition. Consolidation is another question. The Korean CIA is still sniffing around the new union leaders, and any effective help from outside, especially from church groups, is denounced as communist subversion. But the bureaucrats running the ministries and the companies are all young men. Apart from the political leaders and company chairmen, all the movers and shakers in Korea are in their 30s or early 40s and they seem genuine in wanting to move out of a dictatorship era into a system of pluralistic political relations.

If the process succeeds it will be because Korea industrialised itself at a terrible cost. Without its current state of economic development it is difficult to see what pressures would force the military to relinquish power. Industrial growth may not be a sufficient condition for political democracy but it is a necessary pre-condition. Unlike in Latin America there are no revolting differences in wealth co-existing side by side. There *are* some super-rich Koreans but the income differentials between workers, managers and civil servants are among the most squashed in the world. Nor is there the mass illiteracy of India. Koreans are fanatics for education; every trade union adviser, church activist or government bureaucrat appears to have a PhD after his name.

○

The scornful nickname of the Japanese for the Koreans is 'garlic eaters', and garlic is sold in the supermarkets in two-kilo baskets — no question of buying a dainty little bulb or tress. This is no land for foodies, however well fed the Koreans themselves appear to be. Foreigners tend to get endless strips of meat grilled on a brazier at the table, with taste buds blasted through helpings of *kimshi*, the garlic-laden spicy cabbage pickle that arrives with everything. But food consciousness is growing. A proposal by the government to allow irradiated food with a longer shelf life to go on sale had to be withdrawn after the ministry was flooded with protests from health-conscious Koreans. Also certain to disappear is the curious ritual of the air raid alert which I witnessed at noon in the centre of Seoul. Sirens wailed and Koreans hurtled off the streets into cafés or the network of underground shopping arcades. Buses halted and disgorged their passengers onto the pavement. In five minutes a busy modern city had come to a dead stop. All to be heard was birds singing and the rustle of wind through the leaves. An exercise designed to keep up fear of attack from the North has lost its anti-communist political message. Instead it is a peaceful moment of calm and stillness, a welcome break from city rhythms, a pause for nature to assert her noise and mood. If the Koreans succeed with their democratisation I hope they hang on to the occasional air raid alert, partly as a reminder of life under the military, partly because there are lots of compulsory orders a state can issue which are liberating and worthwhile.

Denis MacShane

ROGER WODDIS

The First Stone

'In the Soviet Union they do not treat human beings the way we think they ought to.' — George Shultz, US Secretary of State

In Russia, where the human face is blushing,
They don't treat humans in the way they ought:
All dissidents are suitable for crushing,
If they express an independent thought.

We tend to find such goings-on quite shocking,
And no one's sure what makes the Kremlin tick;
But when we see the doors that need unlocking,
We do not hesitate to heave a brick.

We're proud to think we favour opposition
(Although they're either rogues or bloody fools).
While Eastern leaders view us with suspicion,
Here in the West self-righteousness still rules.

We must be realists: it would be silly
To denigrate the sins of certain powers.
E.g. there's Pinochet in charge of Chile,
But thank the Lord, at least he's one of ours.

And here at home, rejecting the suggestion
That we're too quick at switching off the lights,
To ban or not to ban is not the question,
So much as sounding off on human rights.

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BEN PIMLOTT

Bryan Gould and social ownership: what is it supposed to achieve?

WHEN POLITICIANS say they are on the offensive it often means the reverse. 'Labour is on the offensive,' said Bryan Gould at the Fabian/*New Statesman* gathering last Saturday, and we were immediately on our guard. Labour, he urged , must not restrict social and common ownership to the industries the Tories have privatised. It must think about applying new forms of these traditional socialist ideas to the whole economy. The innocent listener might have concluded that Labour was planning to enter the next election committed to the nationalisation of every sweetshop. Gnarled cynics smelt an abject retreat.

Has there ever been a time when nationalisation wasn't a cause for blushes? Even in the 1940s it was a cause for dispute between left and right. Only in the last few decades, however, has it become a religious icon. Ironically, it was Hugh Gaitskell's ham-fisted attempt to drop the commitment altogether after the 1959 election defeat that turned the oddly-worded Clause IV of the party constitution — which few people had previously noticed — into a holy mantra. Almost three decades later, a lexicon of euphemisms attempts to hide the party's guilty secret from the electorate, and fails to relieve the party from its own historic obsession.

Meanwhile, Thatcherite privatisations have so far made the ailment worse. In the old days, the Lab-Con game was played by Queensbury rules. With a few symbolic exceptions (the steel industry was one) it was assumed that steps taken by one side would not be immediately undone by the other. Labour didn't restore the controls the Tories had taken off in 1951, and the Tories didn't disturb Labour's nationalisations. This meant that the issue was simply whether to settle for the existing public sector, or seek an extension. Labour usually solved the problem by putting one or two industries on its shopping list, enough to please the comrades, but not enough to make anybody else unhappy.

Privatisation, accompanied by evidence of public approval, has changed all that. In order even to return to the *status quo ante* within the space of a five-year term, a Labour administration would have to carry out the most rapid nationalisation programme ever known. And the passing of each Tory-controlled parliament increases the scale of the problem.

SINCE 1979, Labour's policy was at first governed by a simple principle of tit-for-tat: anything they took we would take back, and a bit more to teach 'em right. *Labour's Programme 1982* made four commitments: assets sold by the Tories should be restored to public ownership; the public sector should be 'substantially' extended to include profitable firms; public corporations should be reorganised to make them more responsive to workers and consumers; and co-operatives should be encouraged. In addition, shareholders were to be compensated at cost price only.

This had the merit of being bold and unmistakable. It also had the feature, apparently, of being unelectable. By 1987, plans for 'social ownership', as it was now rightly called, were a good deal vaguer. A total buy-back policy was abandoned, and where re-nationalisation was envisaged, this would take the form of converting shares into government bonds. For other privatised firms, Neil Kinnock wrote in 1986, 'we have to assess them in terms of the goals of the policy . . . The extent, form and content of social ownership is flexible . . .' [1]

> ***'The purposes of public ownership remain unclear. In the new Labour radicalism it needs to be demystified and seen as a handy tool, to be included in a kitbag of devices to strengthen the economy and revive employment'***

Today, as over nuclear weapons, there is still a cruel dilemma. Does public ownership matter in itself, as part of the socialist vision, or not? On the one hand there is the party, which still holds to the belief that public ownership and socialism are virtually synonymous. Certainly there can be few members of the Tribune-dominated shadow cabinet who, at their selection conferences a decade or so ago, did not swear blind that they would as soon abandon nationalisation as run over their grandmothers. On the other hand there are the voters, the overwhelming majority of whom have never been persuaded that nationalisation in any form is a good idea. Meanwhile, the government's distribution of largesse through new share issues has given much of Labour's natural constituency a vested interest in opposing the policy printed on every Labour member's party card.

Against this background, Labour is — in practice — edging still further away from old-style nationalisation. In a recent interview, Neil Kinnock indicated that he will be looking at regulation as an alternative to taking British Telecom and British Gas into public ownership — a significant shift; and it is unlikely that there will be any policy to re-re-nationalise steel, despite the ritual opposition that will be mounted against its privatisation.

HOW FAR this process goes, and in what direction, remains to be seen. Meanwhile, it may be that the decline and fall of Tory policy will come to Labour's rescue. For privatisation is fast losing its gloss. Not only is the service provided by some of the industries concerned becoming a national scandal. The recent decline in share prices has reduced some of the privatised stock to below the purchase price. More important, some 40 per cent of those who bought the new issues have now sold them: substantially reducing the range of people committed to the Tory utopia.

In poor countries, dictators sometimes try to buy agrarian support by doling out parcels of land. Within a short time, big landlords invariably buy it back, restoring their former oligopoly. So too with the privatisations. Official claims of 9 million shareholders in Britain today may be discounted: the true figure is probably now closer to 7 million, and shrinking. At the same time, the BP fiasco continues to cause concern, as the Bank of England seems destined to buy most of the new shares at way below their market value. The government's shortfall on the second instalment is to be met in part by the sales of steel and Girobank. But whether — without resorting to selling off the streets — the government can restore the total number of shareholders to anything like the 1987 level in 1991 is open to question. By then, the capitalist crusade may have begun to wear very thin. If so there is a chance that common ownership could be turned against its attackers.

For this to happen, Labour's starting point must not be the question: 'How may public ownership best be presented?' but 'What is public ownership intended to achieve?' The economic historian Sidney Pollard has described how Labour, in the past, has often favoured the nationalisation of the banks. The trouble is that each generation has favoured it for a different reason, and often the reasons conflict: 'Beginning with redistributive justice and economic power, we move to efficiency, the maintenance of employment, the prevention of poverty, the control of foreign policy, the planning of industry, efficiency and low cost in banking, the prevention of fraud, the reduction of nepotism, the development of long-term investment, and many others from time to time.' [2]

Today, the purposes of public ownership are scarcely clearer. In the new Labour radicalism it needs, therefore, to be fully demystified and regarded as a handy tool, to be included in a kitbag of devices to strengthen the economy and revive employment.

Should the Bevanite principle, derived from Herbert Morrison and the Fabian centralists, that socialism means the replacement of the private sector by state capitalism be dropped, once and for all? Probably. The danger, of course, is that nothing except a smokescreen will be offered in its place. Back then to Bryan and his offensive. Is Gouldism merely Wilsonian sleight of hand, or something better? I remain staunchly optimistic. But watch this space. □

1. *Making Our Way*, Blackwell £3.95.
2. 'Nationalisation of the Banks: the chequered history of a socialist proposal' in D. E. Martin and D. Rubinstein (editors) *Ideology and the Labour Movement*, Croom Helm £9.95.

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What's left of the left of the French left

Saint-Ouen

THIS IS NOT the quarrelling Communism of Spain, the adventurous Communism of Italy or the Stalinist kitsch of the Communist Party of Great Britain. This is the real thing. An old-style totalitarian party meeting in a concrete sports hall reminiscent of some drab Peoples' Democracy. Delegates attend and listen. There is none of the Brownian motion characteristic of a normal political party and the various incidents are as 'spontaneous' as a Busby Berkley movie.

The 26th Congress of the French Communist Party last week more or less consummated the party's decline. Some 1,704 delegates met to 'debate' the party's lore for the next three years in Saint-Ouen, but this was the Congress at which the party had to do something spectacular to lift itself off the floor. Since 1981, when the Party polled 15 per cent in the presidential elections, the vote has now shrunk to the point where the polls put its presidential candidate Lajoinie at 4 per cent. But the party chose to turn to old certainties not new ideas.

There was no sign of this collapse at the Congress which was in fact the end point in a long process of evicting so-called 'renovators' from the cells and party apparatus. There have been waves of protest in the party before and they have been a constant since 1978 when the leadership sabotaged the possibility of a left-wing election victory. What was new this time was the number of local elected officials involved in the dissidence. Yet for the last year the nominees of Secretary-General Marchais have been crushing the remaining islands of dissent, including the large Haute-Vienne Federation. 'Renovators' have been expelled, or have 'put themselves outside of the party' as the current jargon has it and federations have been brutally brought to heel.

Discipline is the first lesson of the Congress. Far from loosening control, Marchais has armour-plated its centralism. Delegates were handpicked and nominated by Marchais: like the Duke of Newcastle's bishops they worship their maker. Marchais became the point of reference for all things in this Congress. But, despite the pressures, two dissident federations (Doubs and South Corsica) slipped through and Félix Damette, the last 'renovator' on the Central Committee spoke. However, even if Damette had been a centipede he wouldn't have been left with a leg to stand on. He was evicted on Sunday.

Marchais' introductory speech, four and a half hours long, intensified the East European feeling, and it was followed by a 99.3 per cent vote of approval — poor Jaruzelski would have appreciated that. Trying to capture a speech in a few words is like Monty Python's summarising Proust competition, but there were two points of particular interest. First Marchais attacked the Socialist President Mitterrand along what are now standard lines: for 'Atlanticism' and being no different from the Right. Marchais also hinted darkly at calling for 'abstention' on the second round of the presidential elections. But Marchais is between a rock and a hard place: the party cannot just support the Socialists, on the other hand if it attacks Mitterrand, the Communist electorate deserts the party.

But Marchais also returned to the old stance of unconditional support for the Russians. This goes down badly with the voters who, despite Gorbachev, are very suspicious of Russian intentions and have learnt to love the bomb. Marchais' discovery that things are jumping in the USSR only makes the party's previous triumphalism the more ridiculous. Stalin, it transpires, was a sort of Pam Ewing dream and Russia is now back in real socialism. Moreover Marchais' love for Gorbachev is not, it would seem, entirely reciprocated.

But there is worse. The principal target of the Congress was the former Communist Pierre Juquin. Juquin has declared himself 'Renovator' Communist candidate for President and since Juquin was a party representative over many years (he was the 'Stalinist' bundled out of Nanterre University by students in 1968) he is now picking up support from Communist voters. One poll puts him well ahead of the party's own candidate Andre Lajoinie. To call Lajoinie a cypher would be to give too glowing an account of his personality — he presents, of course, no challenge to Marchais — and will need all the party's organisation, and a lot of luck, to beat off the challenge from Juquin.

In Brecht's terms the leadership has lost confidence in the party and decided to elect another one; but unfortunately the party cannot elect new voters. The fight for the Communist electorate is on with a declining party on one side and Juquin's rainbow coalition on the other. It looks as if, even at this bantam weight, the party is fighting out of its class.

David S. Bell

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BOOKS

Citizenship: don't sign up here

THE HOME OFFICE has printed 175,000 leaflets which effectively discourage people from exercising their right to register as British citizens. The leaflets, apparently produced as a response to a bureaucratic crisis, falsely imply that there's no real advantage in registering.

Until the end of this year, many people, including Commonwealth citizens who have lived here without immigration restrictions since before 1973, and women married to British citizens before 1983, have a right to register as British citizens. The demand has been so great that many advice agencies have run out of application forms, and the Home Office immigration department in Croydon is besieged with long queues of confused people unsure of their rights.

The Home Office response is to tell people that they don't have to register if they don't want to. 'Your other rights in the United Kingdom will not change *in any way,*' says the leaflet. 'You will not lose your entitlements to social benefits, such as health services, housing, welfare and pension rights.' And it concludes: 'Your position under the immigration laws is not changed.'

That's all true, but it omits some rather important facts. First, the Home Office can always change its mind—as it has done with the new Immigration Bill, which breaks undertakings given in 1971. Second, people who don't register but then leave the country for several years could find it hard to get back in. Third, if they don't register they can be deported if they are convicted of a criminal offence, if their presence in the UK is judged not to be 'conducive to the public good' or on national security grounds. Fourth, unless they're EEC citizens they will find it harder than British citizens to travel to Europe.

If they miss the 31 December deadline they will have to apply for naturalisation instead. As the leaflet says, 'this is not an automatic right', but it reassures that 'on average less than one application in ten is refused'. What it doesn't say is that it costs nearly three times as much—£170 instead of £60. And it doesn't mention that applicants have to pass an English language test, which is usually administered by a police officer

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visiting the home, and a 'good character' test, which involves checks with Special Branch files.

According to Ken Browne, an advice worker at Brixton Law Centre: 'There are an awful lot of rumours flying around about registration. Good hard reliable information is at a premium. Advice workers are being bombarded with enquiries. Given the amount of money which the Home Office is making out of these registrations, they should be spending much more on publicity, such as television advertisements. A few misleading leaflets are not enough.'

Jolyon Jenkins

Uncivil liberties

THE SCOTTISH Council for Civil Liberties has not had a good year. Its former chairperson, Richard Kinsey, has compared the behaviour of its executive to 'backstreet solicitors'. Its former general secretary, David Godwin, has warned that the organisation risks being destroyed 'financially and morally' by his claim of unfair dismissal against it. Its executive has accused Kinsey of making 'mischievous, dishonest and inaccurate' allegations. Its new chairperson, Alan Miller, has described the actions of both Kinsey and Godwin as 'the pitiful machinations of self-serving publicity seekers'.

SCCL, in other words, has suffered the most bitter and damaging public row in its 17-year history. According to one side, the deal agreed at last weekend's extraordinary general meeting means that SCCL can now put its troubles behind it and get on with the work of defending civil liberties from threats like the poll tax, to be introduced in Scotland in 1989. According to the other side, its troubles have only just begun.

The public invective has been strong: the private talk of lies, plots and dirty tricks unprintable. The arguments have been confusing, contorted and much more personal than political. About the only issue on which there is general agreement is that at least part of the problem stems from years of poor management — an endemic problem among small voluntary organisations.

The dispute arose over how Godwin's job as general secretary would change when SCCL expanded and was restructured. He was given a written warning last year because of perceived administrative failings and his conduct was further reviewed earlier this year. Richard Kinsey, while still SCCL chairperson, proposed that Godwin (at the time the organisation's only full-time employee) should stay on as a research and policy officer while a new administration and liaison officer of equal status was appointed. The rest of the executive disagreed and, although they offered Godwin a similar research post, made it clear that they wished him to report to a new director. Kinsey resigned over the issue and Godwin refused to accept the post offered by the executive on the grounds that it was demotion. He was sacked and has announced his intention of taking his case to an industrial tribunal.

At last weekend's meeting, the 15-member executive's actions were endorsed by 103 votes to 25 with nine abstentions. Whether or not this really means the end of SCCL's crisis depends on the tribunal's verdict next year and what compensation, if any, it will require the SCCL to pay Godwin. In the meantime, the defence of our civil liberties, which has rarely been more important, is likely to continue to suffer.

Rob Edwards

'Yes, we lied'

SOCIAL SECURITY minister Nicholas Scott has admitted that the Conservatives lied in the election campaign when they promised to compensate claimants for compulsory contributions to their rates bills. (Although he didn't put it quite like that.)

From April 1988, social security claimants will have to pay one-fifth of their rates: part of the 'we have ways of making you vote Tory' drive which will culminate in the poll tax. The Tories steered a U-turn on the hustings this May when they said they would put up benefits by the average amount claimants would have to pay. Norman Tebbit explained how it would work:

> If the person concerned lives in a good Tory borough, their average amount will more than pay their *community charge, If they live in one of the less* happy [viz, Labour] boroughs, they may find that it's rather more difficult.

We pointed out (*NS* 13 November) that, in the confusion of the change next year from Supplementary Benefit to a new system called Income Support, the government had managed to lose much of this promised uprating. A week later Nicholas Scott told the Commons:

> When we came to introduce Income Support, we were perfectly entitled to set the benefit levels as we thought appropriate, but compensation has been provided for the minimum contribution to rates.

In other words, they *have* added £1 a week to benefits to cover the average rates payment. It's just that they have cut benefits at the same time. ●

ILEA leader's magnet for brickbats

IT DOESN'T take much for the new realism to founder on old realities, one of which is the politician's maxim of not sticking your head out too far in case someone chops it off. The leader of the Inner London Education Authority, Neil Fletcher, found this out when his Labour Group recently discussed the much publicised speech he made at party conference in Brighton.

Fletcher's speech had broken new ground by attacking a lot of old Labour shibboleths and stressing that high standards and excellence would be at the forefront of the party's education policy.

The speech went down very well with the Labour front bench and even earned him the accolade of 'the Conservatives' blue-eyed boy' from the *Times Education Supplement*. But Fletcher had not discussed his speech with his Labour Group beforehand and one particular section of the speech got up the noses of the comrades — the mention of 'magnet' schools.

These have been pioneered in the United States by concentrating resources on 'sink' schools, with an emphasis on science and technology, which has been successful in transforming such schools into parents' favourites. The right-wing think tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs, has taken up the idea here and Kenneth Baker's initiative at last year's Conservative party conference, City Technology Colleges, are the result of its lobbying.

Fletcher claims his idea is far removed from the US concept. He suggests that schools can 'discover a new role within a non-selective comprehensive local authority system by offering curriculum specialities such as art, music, drama, science, etc'. He argues that already some London schools do this — Pimlico comprehensive for example is renowned for its music teaching — and that it can be done without selection, by ensuring there is a mixed ability intake.

That did not stop him from getting his knuckles rapped. His predecessor as ILEA leader, Frances Morrell, successfully proposed a motion in the Labour Group which said that the working party set up to discuss Fletcher's plan for reform should not even have magnet schools back on the agenda. Morrell argued that it is impossible to have such schools without eventually creating a selective system, and accused Fletcher of adopting the 'Black Papers' framework of the Tory propaganda of the 1970s.

Fletcher is undaunted, reiterating his ideas in the latest issue of *New Socialist*, published this week.

But this defeat does not augur well for the much sterner test that Fletcher's new realism faces over the coming weeks when his ratecapped authority must bridge a gap of £150 million between what it wants to spend and the budget set by the government.

Christian Wolmar

If the caption fits

No 47

Yes, it's our own Mrs Thatch and the man with the map of the Soviet Union on his forehead — an historic meeting! What do you think they are saying, thinking or muttering between clenched teeth? Speech/thinks bubbles or captions to reach us at the *NS* by Monday 14 December. Winner gets a ten-pound book-token.

Winner: No 45

Elton John: "What do you think of them so far?" Robert Maxwell: "Rubbish." *(Katie Mallett, Canvey Island.)*

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Breast-beating at 'Beating the blues'

THERE HAS to be something slightly gloomy about the Fabian Society; it's something to do with the long haul of gradualism and with being terribly rational. The Society made a big effort to change its image with last weekend's 'Beating the Blues' conference, also sponsored by the gradualist and rational *New Statesman*. But some of the familiar antique gloom continued to darken corners of the upbeat sessions and workshops.

So much so that frontbench Labour MP Tony Blair said that he wanted to go home and shoot himself. His suicidal impulse was prompted by Charles Leadbeater of the *Financial Times*, whose analysis of the division of the workforce into insiders and outsiders did nothing to lift the Labour Party's electoral depression.

Luckily, Blair decided to stay where he was and take shots at Ann Pettifor instead. She, of the Women's Action Committee and claiming to 'represent women', made the mistake of defending Ken Livingstone. Blair angrily demanded to know how Labour's image was improved when, in the week the education and poll tax bills were published, the public face of the party was a debate about its policy on Northern Ireland.

Dianne Hayter, of the Fabians' executive committee, was much more into the spirit of the thing. She bounced about in a yellow jumpsuit and enthusiastically used an overhead projector in the session on 'Building a Mass Party'. You always know that people who use overhead projectors are going to use them to illuminate a few words stating the glaringly obvious. She was no exception. Most people don't like going to Labour Party branch meetings very much and they ought to be made to feel more welcome, she said. She also conducted an impromptu survey of the audience which produced two good reasons for going to party meetings — 'Trot-squashing' and 'extreme social deprivation' — and two good reasons for not going to party meetings — 'undemocratic, cliquish and unrepresentative' and 'moved, can't find local party'.

Peter Shore, on the other hand, refused to join in the fun — let alone the debate he was supposed to be having with ex-CND chairperson Joan Ruddock about nuclear disarmament. It was just as much her fault as his, though, because she insisted on the moral absolutism of unilateral nuclear disarmament while he insisted that the defence policies of Britain and France were the only rational ones. And he warned, gloomily and Fabianly, of the (gradual) death of unilateralism.

In fact the 'Building a Mass Party' was one of the few sessions which lived up to the 'Beating the Blues' title in both its meanings. Gordon Brown, a YAK (Young, Able Kinnockite), justified his election to the shadow cabinet with a funny speech which not only lifted the spirits but made practical proposals for beating the Tories. He propounded the Tribune MPs' plan for cut-price party membership for trade unionists who pay their political levy — a sensible organisational measure which could be worth as much as all policy reviews put together.

John Rentoul

POLITICAL SKETCH

Kind hearts and sticky fingers

Edward Pearce

'THE FINGERPRINTS of the Treasury are all over this bill, Madame Deputy Speaker. Indeed, they reach all the way to its throat.' The comment on the government's legislation for health charges came not from Tony Banks or any of the other left-wing corsairs lurking under the gallery, nor from the Labour front bench. They are the views of Jerry Hayes ('please don't call me Jeremy; only my mum and Mrs Thatcher do that'), a young, pleasant, Afro-blond Tory who has probably foresworn advancement for the rest of the century, but who does himself much credit with independent witnesses.

He was responding to the stupefying folly of proposals which by instituting *initial* charges for dental and optical tests has upset any number of people. Dame Jill Knight, well-known leftist and Trafalgar Square regular, Mr McCrindle from Brentwood, a man almost professionally inoffensive, Barney Heyhoe, ex-DHSS and ex-Treasury and thus better equipped than most to talk about fingerprints, were only a few of the unhappy voices from the government side. By rolling over in cabinet committee with bacterial pneumonia, John Moore may have done himself a power of good. A dubious chalice with a re-spray and a doctored speedo, if we may move *very* sharply about our metaphors, has passed to Tony Newton.

Let me assure indignant leftwingers everywhere, Mr Newton is one of the world's most unvicious men. An old wet with a backlog of good works, one of the three people who actually understand how the DHSS, that Schleswig-Holstein of the Elephant and Castle actually works, Newton, subordinated to Moore, must still deliver on savings and petty cuts. That is the political culture law and if you stay in government you adjust to it, a good man anaesthetised. As Robin Cook remarked for Labour, the best way to the heart of any legislation from this cabinet is to examine the financial schedule. And indeed there they are in times of negligible borrowing, platinum-edged creditworthiness with money forming boarding parties to scramble into the country — claiming in that financial schedule that the changes should reduce expenditure.

To quote from Mr Hayes again: 'Why, when the nursing profession is simply demoralised?' The impression rapidly formed on Monday that this one will run and run. Tony Newton, normally an amusing and deft speaker, delivered his brief with a sort of souped-up apathy, like one grown old and grey ahead of time in service to the shrill person in possession.

What is a nice boy like that doing guaranteeing that poorer people will catch glaucoma, rot their teeth and have incipient brain tumours missed, all things which flow from putting a market price on initial consultations? Mr Hayes didn't care for it, Dame Jill who had some unnerving accounts of the major diseases spotted in eye tests, wasn't pleased. Only perhaps Auberon Waugh who tells us that the happiness of the disgusting working class offends him, could have delivered Newton's brief with any sort of pleasure.

LABOUR WAS lucky in Robin Cook. The old touch of ginger intolerability is missing. If not mellowed, he has improved his performance no end now that he has factual cases to grind up. But he declines to go over the top or get into the sort of throbbing-tenor indignation which debilitates a good many Labour politicians. Any Scottish politician of talent always has the example of Lord Braxfield, the intellectual hanging judge, at the back of his mind. Cook's style — conversational-derisive one might call it — occasioned not a flicker of Tory objection or resistance. On this issue, if they keep their nerve, stick to the argument and argue rationally, Labour has the sort of material from which an opposition wins real strength.

Cook was suitably forensic about the juxtaposition of tax cuts and unnecessary deaths. He cut crisply into the prospect of being on the slipway to an entirely private dental service, and observed that one sixth of the sum earmarked for tax cuts would transform our hospitals. It no longer sounded like the usual Labour *verismo* rhetoric.

There are moments when ideas run out of fashion. High spending and casual public accountancy turned off important numbers of voters and serious people inside the Labour Party ten years ago. Labour started to lose the argument when it insisted upon spending, payrolls and bureaucratic structures as inherent good things. They sounded like blowsy rhetoricians and lost the argument. Now, by contrast, with hospitals and the NHS generally squeezed to the point where the Presidents of the Three Colleges go on the record and red lights start flashing everywhere, the Conservative position looks worse than hard-hearted, it looks irrational.

What we witnessed on Monday was Tony Newton trapped between John Moore's desire to please and the cool disinclination of the Tories to be so crude. Everyone wonders where the government will run into trouble. And, of course, there is always an element of exponential thinking around in politics which foolishly supposes that because Mrs Thatcher has triumphed so far, she will always triumph. In fact, she has on her hands a piece of provocative legislation whose precondition of success is that the sticky-fingered part of the national psyche wants tax cuts more than it wants the health service to work. It sounds glibly smart, but it could just be the fateful shift of gear from cynicism into fallacy which constitutes fatal politics.

The opposition to Mr Moore's penny wisdom and Mr Lawson's passion for greasing big and medium-sized wheels is not socialist, it is worried, middle-of-the-road, liberal, centrist and wet, though hardly feeble, Tory. It is consensual. To quote Mr Hayes yet again: 'We have hearts as well, some of us!' Never mind hearts, the Tories are about to lose an argument. □

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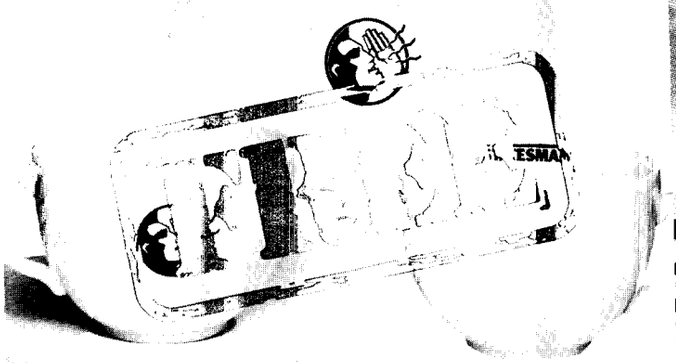

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Zircon: Why MPs didn't want to know

As the dust of Zircon settles, **DUNCAN CAMPBELL** *reveals how MPs colluded in being deceived by the government over the central issue of democratic accountability. He further argues that the Labour opposition's failure of nerve over 'national security' has brought Britain to a critical watershed for free speech*

IN THE COURSE of just this one year, the BBC and *New Statesman* endured raids and writs against the press unprecedented this century, the government tried to overturn parliament's centuries-old independence of the courts, and a series of judicial pronouncements has created a new civil law of official secrecy more powerful and intimidating than its criminal counterpart.

These events did not begin with Zircon, nor have they ended since the Attorney General announced last month that there would be no prosecutions. But the gag orders of the last two weeks against me and, separately, the BBC, are telling evidence of the rapidly growing confidence of our official censors. After the Labour leadership's first highly-defensive response to the Zircon affair, they now feel secure that they may safely disregard protests on behalf of civil liberty.

Very little of the parliamentary debate that has occurred has taken note that the purpose of the original BBC *Secret Society* programme disclosing Zircon's existence (*NS* 23 January 1987) was not to 'blow' the technology of the planned new British electronic monitoring satellite. Instead, the article described a 'parliamentary bypass operation' — whereby the £500 million cost of the satellite was entirely concealed from parliament and its Public Accounts Committee (PAC). This was a direct breach of instructions given by the PAC in 1982. After the concealment of £1,000 million expenditure on the Chevaline nuclear missile system, all such costly defence projects were to be reported to the PAC in the form of a (confidential) Major Projects Statement.

Neither the government nor Defence Ministry have formally denied the concealment, taking refuge instead in the intricate language of the agreement with the PAC, or referring to non-existent 'national security' exemptions. (Non-existent because the exemptions were invented, after the fact, in January 1987; the Major Projects Statement procedure was in fact designed to deal with the most highly-classified projects of the day, such as Chevaline.)

In 1983, officials from the Defence Ministry, at the request of GCHQ, made a specific approach to the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey, to request that details of the Zircon plan not be disclosed to the PAC. The very fact that the approach took place was evidence enough that the Defence Ministry were well aware that the project *should* have been reported. Had the Attorney General opted to prosecute last month, it would have been extremely difficult for the government to have prevented the deception being exposed.

A strident, although unsubstantiated, chorus alleging damage to national security distracted parliamentary attention from the central issue of democratic accountability. So, although parliament spent two days debating the raids on the BBC and the censoring of MPs, there has never been a formal debate about Zircon and defence accountability. The two parliamentary committees directly concerned in the scrutiny of defence accounts — both Conservative-dominated — have refused to take evidence from us.

But the January police raids on the *New Statesman*, the BBC and my and two other reporters' homes were not part of a proper criminal investigation of damage to national security. The government had known since July 1986 that I was making a programme involving Zircon, following interviews with former defence chiefs. If a police or security investigation was needed, it could have been launched then; or, later on, when they obtained their own copy of the BBC film. Even in the week that the BBC ban was announced, when it was clear that a row would ensue, the Special Branch were not alerted. This only happened *after* the Prime Minister had been embarrassed and infuriated by the failure of her attempts to prevent the story being reported.

> *'All the Leader of the Opposition could find to say on day one of the Zircon row was to condemn the Prime Minister for being insufficiently timely or harsh in the speed or quality of her oppression'*

When she discovered that the *New Statesman* had published the story, and so nullified the effect of the ban on MPs seeing the original programme, she condemned us as 'people more interested in trying to ferret out information which is of use to our enemies than in preserving the defence interests of this country . . . people who use freedom in order to destroy freedom'. That the *New Statesman* was a 'left-wing publication' was 'very significant'. On Monday the same week, the Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary had contented themselves with bickering about whose department was responsible for the leak (if either). But now the temperature in Downing Street rose to incandescence. The next day, the Special Branch *were* sent in.

The character of the Special Branch inquiry became all too plain a month later, when the gumshoes called on Jonathan Miller, a media reporter on *The Times*. Miller had made his own quite separate revelations about Zircon. Detective Superintendent Hilton Cole, leading the investigation, was asked if he was thinking of prosecuting *The Times* as well as the *NS*. 'No', said Cole, he didn't want to 'have a witch-hunt against journalists'. 'Just Duncan Campbell?' said Miller. Cole concurred, unprepared for American Miller's characteristically terse response: 'Well, I want to be a martyr, too'.

Bludgeoning journalists

After the Secret Society row was over, the former BBC Assistant Director General, Alan Protheroe, attacked the government's use of the Official Secrets Act against journalists as a 'bludgeon . . . [The act] is an affront to contemporary society . . . an overt intimidation of the concepts which underline the ideal of democracy.' If BBC management had been able to hold to this view from the beginning, the Secret Society row, triggered by the BBC's own self-censorship, would not have happened.

In the event, the BBC very nearly did transmit Zircon; that the programme came within a hair's breadth of being shown as scheduled was much to the credit of Alasdair Milne, then the Director General. From the moment the Secret Society series was first announced in the autumn of 1986, he had been put under enormous pressure by some of the BBC governors to ban the entire series. Most of the pressure came from Somerville principal Daphne Park, Scottish governor Watson Peat, and ex-diplomat Sir Curtis Keeble. They maintained that it was wrong in principle to permit a journalist like me to make BBC programmes.

Eventually, Milne himself was ousted. His sacking did not improve the BBC's ability to handle conflicts between the state and broadcasters. Indeed, the Corporation's centralised journalistic vetting system has been enormously intensified. A honeymoon period in which the incoming DG, Michael Checkland, promised that decentralisation of editorial responsibility would be a key feature of his reign has been brief indeed. Since then the government has obliged on the occasions the BBC has not operated self-censorship, the banning order on the *My Country, right or wrong* radio series being the most recent example.

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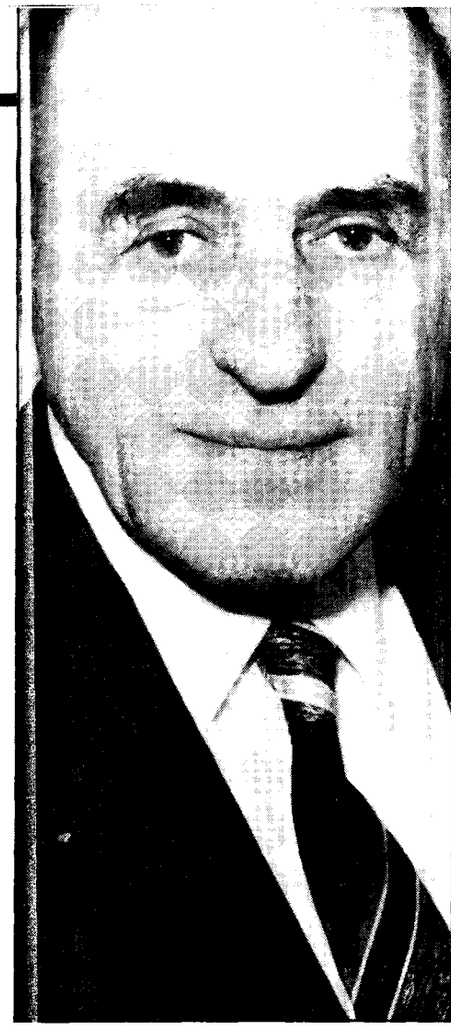

Universal Pictorial Press

The Labour watchdog who won't bark

NOT ONLY has the Public Accounts Committee not held any formal enquiry into the Zircon issue, the chairman, Robert Sheldon (right), tried to have his interview withdrawn, in effect cancelling the programme even before the BBC ban took effect. As custodian of the five-year-old agreement about the disclosure of major defence projects to his committee, Sheldon might have been expected to express righteous indignation on learning about Zircon. During an interview, he appeared to do this. But immediately afterwards, he became angry — not with the Ministry of Defence for deceiving him, but with me and the BBC for finding out and proposing to announce the news.

Until now, it has not been relevant to the Zircon affair to explain why Sheldon (who has consistently refused to meet us or discuss these issues) may have personal reasons for not wishing to agree with the BBC or the *New Statesman*. But it was quite clear to the BBC team in October 1986 that our uncovering of Project Zircon had deeply embarrassed Sheldon. He started the interview by boasting, at considerable length, of how effectively he personally had got the Defence Ministry under control: 'We made sure that this [Chevaline] doesn't happen again. I've taken a number of steps to ensure that'. Then when I asked him about Zircon, he first implied that he *did* but couldn't talk:

> *Campbell:* Has the committee been informed about Project Zircon?
> *Sheldon:* Well, I can't go into any detailed individual projects. These are matters that come before us in the normal way and I wouldn't like to discuss any of those at this stage.
> *Campbell:* Is that one that you are aware of, however?
> *Sheldon:* It, it, I, I wouldn't like to go further on that.
> *Campbell:* Can you tell me if the Committee is aware of this project at all?
> *Sheldon:* No, I can't go further on that one at this stage.

When the camera ran out of film, Sheldon immediately asked what Zircon was. He'd never heard of it. Would we agree not to use the first interview, and refilm it? We agreed to ask the questions again. He then gave us a different (and rather more accurate) answer.

I asked Sheldon about Zircon in particular, explaining what the project was, and what it cost. He said that he didn't know about Zircon — and if our facts were right, it was a 'very serious' matter. But when filming stopped a few minutes later, Sheldon was embarrassed, enraged and loudly abusive. He demanded that the interview be scrapped entirely, and then tried to pressurise the BBC to that end — not on grounds of national security, but because he felt that it had been conducted improperly, as he wasn't forewarned of the Zircon question.

Within a few hours, Sheldon had complained to Broadcasting House and to Alasdair Milne about our conduct of the interview. His complaint was rejected. Sheldon angered Milne considerably by intervening through the new BBC Vice Chairman, Lord Barnett, a personal friend, in an attempt to lean on Milne. Soon after, Sheldon contacted the Controller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey, and established that Zircon did exist, as alleged.

Naturally resentful that Milne had refused his demand to drop the interview, Sheldon subsequently refused to discuss the issue at all with the producer of *Secret Society*, Brian Barr. When the story finally broke, Sheldon assiduously tried to suggest that he had known about it all along. On 20 January, Sheldon told newspapers that '1 have no evidence that parliament has been deceived . . . I made thorough checks to ensure that the procedures were being properly carried out, and I was satisfied.' He told *The Times* that 'he *did* know about the [Zircon satellite]' — but omitted to mention that he only got details of the project *after* the BBC interview. Later forced to acknowledge this, he asserted that reporting it to him had not been necessary as Zircon was still in its project development stage. When it was pointed out that projects as costly as Zircon had to be reported to him as soon as £10 million had been spent on project development (and about £70 million had by then been spent), he changed tack again, and claimed that there was a get-out clause in the agreement with the MoD. He told fellow MPs on 26 January that 'projects may be omitted from [the Major Projects] list on grounds of national security'.

But during the BBC interview the preceding October, Sheldon had said the exact opposite. The MoD, he then confirmed, were not allowed to leave 'anything at all off the list . . . We make sure that everything is on that list'. What about secret projects, I asked? 'We know exactly how the money is being spent, and it's quite right that we should'. What about a major defence project in its initial stages, I asked? 'We are able right at the very earliest stage to examine . . . how it is proposed that they be carried out'.

But when he learned that Sir Gordon Downey, with whom he works closely, had indeed concealed Zircon from him for three years, he changed his account of events several times, as more facts emerged. Sheldon's conduct, and that of the British Public Accounts Committee, thus stands in stark contrast to the normal behaviour of the US Congress in similar circumstances, which would have aggressively challenged any such government deception. The fact that Sheldon refused to acknowledge that Project Zircon raised a real issue of accountability directly helped the government to deny legitimacy to the *Secret Society* programme. But inside the BBC the strongest (and justified) criticism made of the Zircon programme was that I and producer Brian Barr had been 'too kind' to Sheldon by omitting his evasiveness, embarrassment and contradictory answers from the programme. □

The canard of damage to 'national security' was repeatedly raised, but never justified, in the course of the Zircon affair. As the first row broke, on the day the *NS* went on sale, the government had been trying to stop MPs from seeing the *Secret Society* programme, planned for the same afternoon. That morning, there was hectic activity throughout the Commons as Mrs Thatcher asked Neil Kinnock to allow an emergency motion to ban the showing (he agreed without question); attempted to get the High Court to injunct a pre-lunch Commons showing arranged by ITN (the judge refused to make the order); cajoled the Speaker into banning the ITN showing instead (the Speaker agreed but was reputedly infuriated that he was not informed that the Zircon story had by then been published); and invited Kinnock to a special security briefing prior to the afternoon debate (Kinnock agreed).

Rows over 'national security'

At 11am Kinnock, Healey, Hattersley, and John Smith went to the Foreign Office for a briefing with Sir Clive Whitmore, the Ministry of Defence Permanent Secretary. Whitmore's job was to explain why the Zircon revelation damaged national security, and to convince the opposition leadership to support the government's motion to ban the film from the Commons. The meeting was on 'Privy Council terms' — meaning that Kinnock and his party had to agree not to discuss what was said with outsiders. But at the meeting, Kinnock did not see the Zircon film (which he has still never seen). He then refused to have himself or any of his advisers briefed on how the relevant security issues had actually been dealt with.

He thus agreed to hear only the government's side of the argument — a critical error, since the most important feature of such arguments about security is not what is said, but what is omitted. Most importantly, arguments about possible Soviet countermeasures to a satellite of which they

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are forewarned fail when it is realised that the US and USSR have operated dozens of such satellites against each other over the last 14 years.

But when, from a House of Commons office and in the presence of many Labour MPs and one of the front bench defence spokesmen, I offered the answers to any criticism GCHQ had made of the Zircon programme, I was asked not to continue telephoning his press secretary, Patricia Hewitt, in his offices a mere hundred yards away. This was on the grounds that Tory MPs might hear of the calls and criticise him — as they had done in the Peter Wright affair — for permitting his staff to speak to the country's 'enemies'.

Kinnock later announced that he had done what he could 'to uphold the government view that [showing the film] would prejudice national security . . . I would have prevented the film being shown.' But he hadn't seen the film — which was, and is, its own best defence against arguments of 'national security'. The film starts with Sir Frank Cooper, the former MoD Permanent Secretary, explaining that even schoolkids can spot spy satellites like Zircon. Before giving his interview, Sir Frank had insisted on knowing exactly what the programme was about — and was told. Knowing the difference between national security and political embarrassment, Cooper went ahead with the interview. But all that the Leader of the Opposition could find to say on day one of the Zircon row was to condemn the Prime Minister for being insufficiently timely or harsh in the speed or quality of her oppression. Kinnock later backtracked and stated that 'whether it [the disclosure of Zircon] jeopardised national security is a matter yet to be demonstrated'. But his incautious acceptance of the national security case, presented in a one-sided briefing by a far from disinterested government anxious to shield its own embarrassment, gave Mrs Thatcher far more room for manoeuvre than she ever deserved.

Before the Commons sat, Labour defence spokesmen Martin O'Neill and Kevin McNamara, both of whom *had* seen the film first, freely gave their view to the media that they could not see any damage in its contents. But after Kinnock pronounced, they were silenced, and such views could no longer be expressed from the party's front bench. It is extremely doubtful that the government would have dared to be so heavy-handed with the *New Statesman* and the BBC had not most of the Opposition been so effectively muzzled in advance.

Breach of accountability

A second, major reason that the breach of parliamentary accountability never received proper public attention was the attitude during the Zircon row of Robert Sheldon MP, the (Labour) chair of the Public Accounts Committee. It was Sheldon and his committee who had been deceived by the concealment of the planned expenditure on the spy satellite. But he didn't want to know (see box). The committee subsequently went out of its way to repudiate the specifics of the *NS* report, finding in April that although 'a formal process of accountability . . . is at present lacking':

> There are no grounds for supposing that the Zircon project should have been included in the Major Projects Statement as submitted to us . . .

But the committee added the qualifying words, '*given the present rules for the compilation of that Statement*'. The committee again refused to hear evidence from outside, and quotes no evidence on which its view was reached. Nor did it publish the 'present rules' of the Statement. Indeed, the rule under which Zircon was excused disclosure had never been heard of prior to January 1987, and is wholly contrary to the letter and spirit of the Chevaline agreement. It is probably not inconsequential that two members, Winston Churchill and Edward Leigh, already knew that they were to be accused in another (still untransmitted) *Secret Society* programme of involvement in a ruthless campaign against CND. The Defence Committee thus combined with the PAC in assisting the government to cover up the key subject-matter of the whole Zircon row — the deception of parliament.

'Superintendent Cole looked miserable . . . It was evident he would feel much more at home in* The Professionals *than in bandying words with a tiresome pinko jounalist and his clever-clever lawyer'

Perhaps the most chilling memory of these events is not of Special Branch raids (now regrettably, a periodic occurrence) but from visiting the House of Commons during the long afternoon debate on the raid on BBC Scotland. I watched from an upstairs gallery as David Steel and Roy Jenkins condemned the government tactics; Jenkins calling it the work of a 'second-rate police state'. Labour MPs smiled their support; one Conservative came up quietly to offer his support too.

Lord Barnett, Vice Chairman of the BBC Governors, came into the Commons gallery a few rows away. The previous summer, at tea in the House of Lords, he had been briefed by me about the Zircon programme, and had agreed to take part. Barnett had preceded Sheldon as the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, and had been the instigator of the Chevaline agreement. He agreed that deception was serious, but had to withdraw from an interview when he became, for a while, the acting chairman of the governors.

Now he saw me, and didn't smile. He looked scared, which was astonishing. Here was a man of power, dignity and prestige, whom I had known amicably for six years. He was now Peer of the Realm, Privy Councillor, Vice Chairman of the BBC Governors, as well as a socialist and the Labour Party Treasury spokesman in the House of Lords. He was well-to-do, with nothing to fear from the press, and no further need of Mrs Thatcher's patronage.

Yet as I got up he rose quickly, ran up, out through an arch and down the stairs, leaving behind as quickly as possible the Chamber of the House of Commons. Before and since, he has refused all phone calls and letters, and press and TV invitations to discuss the importance of the agreement he once made about government honesty to parliament. Barnett was not alone in fearing to challenge the Prime Minister. The *Guardian* called Kinnock's performance 'pitiful', adding that 'MPs ought to be pressing for details and explanations, not scuttling for cover as soon as the Prime Minister starts unfurling the flag'.

Failing in courage and judgment, Neil Kinnock, Robert Sheldon, and others opened the door to the invasion of their own liberties and rights, as much as ours. The effective result of the Secret Society affair has been that instead of consolidating investigative journalism as an important part of television production and media specialism, it has once again been marginalised. In the new BBC, Secret Society has become the history of how *not* to do things — a failure to control programme-makers and wild-eyed journalists from the far north, rather than a failure to fight the BBC's ground for independence from government, and against such disgraceful events as the unlawful search warrants that were used against BBC Scotland. BBC Scotland has still not been permitted to take sue the Special Branch for damages for the search, despite being advised by the doyen of Scottish lawyers nine months ago that a claim for £50,000 could be pressed.

An absurd scene

As the great molehunt came to an end last spring in an upstairs room of Kings Cross police station, Superintendent Hilton J. Cole of the Special Branch did look miserable. He rubbed his cropped white hair in growing frustration, and leaned forward. It was evident that he would feel much more at home in *The Professionals* than in bandying words with a tiresome pinko journalist and his clever-clever lawyer. He sighed. Finally, he said that he believed that I was 'on record as claiming to be a patriot. How do you reconcile that with shielding a traitor?'

I didn't comment. But Cole's number two, Detective Inspector Jim Williams, then loosed a volley of questions that owed more to oratory than to the gumshoes' search for leakers of government secrets; dare we deny, he asked, that:

> Bringing it (Zircon) out into the open was hardly likely to be in the best interests of the country? How can the disclosure of the existence of Project Zircon be anything but useful to a potential enemy? Do you deny that the interests of this country were prejudiced by its disclosure?

We do — but Williams moved in for the clincher:

> The Leader of the Opposition accepts that Zircon is a secret project affecting national security which has to be protected. Why do you reject his opinion?

Here, surely, we had one of the more absurd scenes in British socialist history — a left-wing journalist being harangued by the Special Branch for failing fully to share the opinions of the Leader of the Labour Party. The failure of the Opposition to establish a credible but critical position on national security issues opened the door, then and since, to an unprecedented wave of censorship and a diminution of parliamentary authority. In making the Zircon programme, we set out to show how parliament has been deceived. But we omitted to note that the watchdogs were asleep. □

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Andrew Wiard/Report

SCARGILL

The last of the popular revolutionaries

In this beleaguered era of trade union compromise, why does the intractably purist Arthur Scargill maintain such popularity with his membership?
JOHN LLOYD ***searches for the sense in a contradictory situation***

ARTHUR SCARGILL defies many things, but nothing so much as the utilitarian theory of popularity. That is the common-sense belief that leaders are popular when they do things which assist their followers to gain more material things in either the short or long term. He has brought the British mineworkers little in the material way in the five years of his presidency, and lost them much. Yet, as the *Mail on Sunday* poll showed earlier this week, he is presently the choice of two thirds of his membership to continue as President.

No need to treat that poll with any more respect than any other, of course. Indeed, much less than most does it compare like with like. Scargill is a household name, face and voice: his challenger, John Walsh is, even now, barely visible. For all that, it is reasonable to conclude that were Scargill held in the kind of low esteem among his members that many on the left and right now think he should be, the poll would have shown that in some form. The continuing popularity of the mineworkers' president needs some explaining.

It was widely expected, within the trade union movement that Scargill would change. Joe (now Lord) Gormley, his predecessor, forecast as much in the concluding chapter of his autobiography, *Battered Cherub*. Len (now Lord) Murray, TUC general secretary when Scargill was elected, thought he would come in to play a 'useful role' on the TUC's left. David (now Lord) Basnett, then the leading (if unavailingly so) member of the TUC general council, thought it a matter of course that he would behave like any other leftwinger seeking to pursue political and industrial ends — that is, he would find it necessary to make deals and, in doing so, make compromises. All were, of course, right in their assumption that that was the rational way to behave. All were wrong about Scargill.

Any trade union leader who actively fails to bring about political change is constantly forced to make choices between 'purity' and compromise. For over half a century, no prominent figure has chosen purity in principle, or at least not for long. Instead, they have sought to make a compromise at the highest level possible, seeking to balance the vision of socialism, or trade unionism, which they hold fresh within them, with the often intractable conservatism of their movement and of British society. At times, one or two have achieved a great deal: the largest of those achievements has been that of Ernest Bevin who did more than any other individual to weave trade unionism into the British social fabric and gain material and political power for organised labour. (Naturally, the individual success was only possible through the work of thousands and the passive acquiescence of millions.) Nearer today, his successor as transport union secretary, Jack Jones, succeeded in striking a high level of bargain in the social compact — only to see his own and other union members smash it on winter picket lines of discontent.

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New realism

To choose such a route when there is the possibility of left advance is of course to invite attack from an uncompromising left, and from those of your members whose hopes are unfulfilled (as they always will be). To choose such a route when there is no such possibility is to invite the criticism that you are bowing before the forces which you should defy. 'New realism', essentially a recognition that organised defiance of the government was hopeless and that deals had to be struck to preserve what could be preserved, was and is painfully open to such an attack. Further, since new realism has few tangible gains—the Thatcher governments have seen no need to reward unions for good behaviour (only to punish them for bad)— it has an unstable base on which to stand.

Arthur Scargill has not made even the most cursory nod in this direction. He has proceeded on the purest possible militantly class-based platform still consistent with minimal recognition of the normal day-to-day structures of trade union work. His posture has been, completely, that of a revolutionary who will not cease to mount the largest of demands in order to demonstrate that the system is incapable of meeting them; nor cease to defend every gain made by the NUM in better days, no matter how intense the pressure to renegotiate. He sees himself as one who keeps the powder dry for a battle on better ground.

This makes no short-term sense at all. British Coal holds all the industrial relations cards: its mineworkers will not take national action for years after the rout of the 1984/85 strike; the NUM is split; its left leadership is most bitterly divided; world coal prices are plunging with the dollar and as the glut of coal continues; the Central Electricity Generating Board, soon to be privatised, will be released from its obligation to buy British coal and encouraged to add more nuclear capacity; and there is no possibility of a change in strategy from the government—barring a nuclear disaster—in the next four years. It is still the case that the mineworkers retain a powerful *potential* industrial strength: but there is no prospect of their exercising it in the foreseeable future.

This position would dictate to any pragmatic leader of the NUM—and John Walsh has already indicated that that is what he intends to be—the tactic of getting as much as possible for contraction. It is the route known as 'selling jobs'; it was that followed, most famously in the mining industry, by the president of the United Mineworkers of America under the leadership of John L. Lewis after the second war (early in his presidency, Scargill exhumed Lewis to spit upon his works). It would see large payoffs to those mineworkers who left, with higher wages for those who stayed: in turn, six-day working would become the norm and the measured pace of work established by the National Power Loading Agreement in the 1960s would give way to a 'butty' system where coal was cut on a kind of contractual, payment-by-results system.

If opposing these plans makes no sense because they will happen anyway, but with less of a price being paid for them, what of the longer term? Is there a day for which the miners' powder *could* be kept, to be lit with a bang that will shake our world?

Pure socialism

Probably not. The kind of socialism Scargill wants to see in the UK is a pure thing; as Paul Foot, in an otherwise sympathetic column in *Socialist Worker*, noted, his politics are of the Soviet communist, pre-Gorbachevian kind. He wants state ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange: a complete statism which, he believes, can somehow be made to co-exist with powerful and aggressive trade unionism. That system would, by definition, end oppression of class; and with that, end poverty, inequality and privilege. He has believed in that since he was a Young Communist, and he believes it now; he will not enter into discussion about the problems of such a model, or the injustices perpetrated by those who have run it. Capitalism is the enemy: keep that in your sights, and keep utopia as utopia.

He is perhaps the last major public figure to believe in such a creation. Those who presently seek to command the policy review within the Labour Party — as last weekend's Fabian conference, 'Beating the Blues', so poignantly demonstrated — have so little faith in this as a model as to be wearied rather than alarmed when it is voiced by zealots from the floor. It has every demographic, social, economic and political trend against it — notably, the partial economic and social liberalisation of the Communist societies which had until recently insisted on its superior efficiency and morality. Again, cataclysms change everything; but barring one, the potential for such a vision to be made flesh in contemporary Britain is disappearingly tiny.

That is not quite the end of the matter, though. For Scargill does make sense in two ways: ways which lie below or above the rational domain (which leftwingers have always liked to insist is their own particular sphere, which of course it is not).

One is the mood of the miners: common now to most manual workers, but felt in them in a particularly refined way. It is what is sometimes called class consciousness, though I think it is a mistake to call it that, or at least to think it has much of the political content class consciousness is supposed to contain. It is a mood of rejection, of knowing that the power which once counted for something — muscle and nerve — now counts for less and less. That the clever people are those who got out of that long ago, and that there is no future in it any more, no future in the communities and the culture which that kind of work created. Certainly, miners have often wanted better than mining for their sons and daughters, but that ambition co-existed with the knowledge that the culture would go on, that the work was essential, that it took special people to do it: in a word, pride. But you can do a lot of it by computer now. Arthur Scargill expresses the resentment over that better than anyone.

And second, linked to that mood is the other which says: if I'm going, I'm going to take some of the bastards with me. I heard that said, in so many words, during the strike (the 'bastards' were of course the visible presence of authority: the police). The late Jack Collins, secretary of the now almost non-existent Kent miners during the strike, used to tell his members: 'Fight like men! And even if you're beaten, you know you'll have fought.' It was not the kind of call you could have made of any other group, but it was heeded in Kent. And elsewhere. If Arthur Scargill wins once more, these will be the reasons for his victory. □

John Lloyd begins a regular 'State of the Nation' column next week.

NEW STATESMAN

Enjoy that thinking feeling over Christmas

Next week's *New Statesman* is a bumper Christmas issue, packed full with analysis and debate, wit, fun and fine writing, all designed to make you think and entertain you at the same time.

○

We have the first, and best, analysis of what May '68 meant then and means now. Our **32-page pull-out supplement** has **Anthony Barnett, David Caute, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Nigel Fountain, Ronald Fraser, Elgy Gillespie, Abbie Hoffman, Paul Johnson,** and **Sheila Rowbotham**. You don't have to steal it; it comes free.

○

Forget EastEnders. Meet the WestEnders. **Steve Bell** introduces a new cartoon strip in two pages of glorious Technicolor. **Christopher Hitchens** says farewell from Washington, while **Roger Woddis** celebrates Christmas Day in the White House. **Shena Mackay** writes a spicy Tale of the Unexpected . . .

○

Yvonne Roberts looks at Christmas charity in full swing. **Suzanne Moore** analyses the return of the mini-skirt. **Jules Lubbock**, Charles Windsor's éminence rouge, gets into street names (if not street cred) and **Patrick Hannay** provides a republican review of community architecture.

○

Peter Kellner, David Marquand and **Ben Pimlott** plot the future of the major political parties, but disagree on how many of them there are. **Francis Wheen**, the diarist the *Independent* found irreplaceable, writes his first weekly diary for the *NS* — and **John Lloyd**, the editor we hope won't be irreplaceable, writes the first of his new *NS* columns.

○

Colin Spencer wishes you a vegetarian Christmas (well, almost . . .) with a sumptuous meal and **Stephen Brook** passes round the Madeira. **George Botterill**, Britain's best chess writer, is twice as large as life, you get **Salamanca** plus **Setsquare**, a quiz as well as the holiday competition.

In case you're full up, we will stop here. But we'll have our usual topical coverage and lots, lots more.

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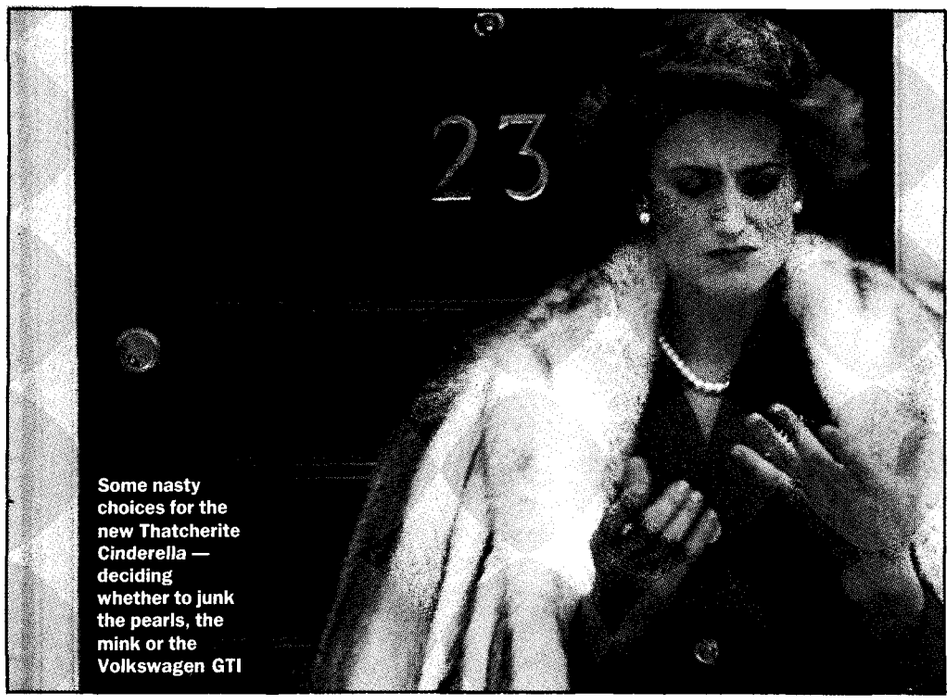
Thatcher's New Woman arrives — in a Golf GTI



Some nasty choices for the new Thatcherite Cinderella — deciding whether to junk the pearls, the mink or the Volkswagen GTI

YVONNE ROBERTS *watches a commercial — and discovers signs of the new avarice of affluence*

THE SETTING: a softly lit mews, presumably a stone's throw from the inner city. A well-groomed woman who has obviously fought her way to the top of the aerobics class runs down the street in a high-gloss version of distress (can anyone remember trembling lips before *Dallas*?). She chucks her pearls, a brooch and her fur coat into various dustbins and is about to fling 'his' car keys down the drain too when she hesitates. How can Cinderella possibly exercise a bit of private enterprise, get on her bike and move on to the next prince, minus a golden coach?

Instead, she climbs into a Volkswagen Golf GTI and roars off into the night. 'If only everything in life was as reliable as Volkswagen,' is the message delivered on the television screen. How apt: Big Ends are so much easier to handle than big bust ups; *things* are so much more satisfying than people.

And so ends a current, brief-but-all-too-perfect-commercial, soaked in the techniques of the soap opera. It is directed specifically at women and, in the 'values' it epouses, demonstrates how much we have all been stained by the nastiness of Thatcherism, while also providing a celluloid tombstone for what, once-upon-a-time, used to be called the aspirations of the liberated woman.

In the 70s the advertising industry grew more and more worried at the possible offensiveness (ie inability to make money) of the traditional stereotypes (millions of housewives groping around the supermarkets of the country, blinded by the whites of their wash). So, first we had an athletic model striding out in a trouser suit, advertising a perfume called Charlie, 'Kind of now, kind of free . . .' (Advertisers like to hedge their bets, a wise move as equality since then has proven to be 'Kind of . . . never'.) And we also had the slimline cigarette designed as a fashion accessory with the slogan, 'You've come a long way, baby . . .' (But not quite far enough then to move us into the cancer wards in droves.)

The hunt for the new woman (and man) has now been reduced to the banal: men in commercials in a permanent state of embarrassment slaving over a hot stove, and highly self-conscious executive-type women sitting around various dinner tables consuming chocolates, liqueurs and coffee, and playing footsies with foreigners. The Volkswagen ad, however, breaks fresh ground.

It is the first to recognise that it's no longer necessary to worry about the new woman's sensitivities. Instead, even that traditional stereotype, the kept woman, can appear attractive if she's seen satisfying a hunger hugely acceptable in the so-called 'new morality' of Thatcherism — the insatiable hunger of avarice. In short, the Volkswagen ad is a flip back to a traditional theme but with a new and quite poisonous twist, in keeping with the times; a case of I'm Alright Jacqueline.

New consensus

Undoubtedly, Mrs Thatcher has created a new consensus in politics which is echoed in the Volkswagen ad: if you're poor, it's your own fault; if you're rich, no matter how the cash came your way, good on you. Survey after survey shows that people (even the poor themselves) believe that the impoverished suffer not from a simple lack of income but as a result of financial ineptitude.

Eight million low-paid workers — most of them women —have only themselves to blame. Now, come, come, Mrs Smith, local barmaid, of course you can manage on £47 a week. On welfare, the condemnation is even harsher. In the eight years since 1979, the numbers on supplementary benefit have doubled to 8 million and, according to effective government propaganda, apparently all because people enjoy life on £23.75 a week.

Unfortunately, this Alice in Wonderland version of 'reality' has not been applied to the wealthy. Instead, ironically, they are cushioned by our generosity. Market research shows we believe they 'deserve' their affluence or we think they've just 'struck lucky'. And as the categories of 'rich' and 'poor' also divide neatly into 'male' and 'female', we are also implying, in these attitudes, that women's natural address is the ghetto of deprivation.

It's a divide-and-rule message which the theme of the Volkswagen ad cleverly triggers. It's a message which has not only destroyed opposition to Mrs Thatcher while the Labour Party has stood by — it has also cut deep into the veins of those who might otherwise have fought for women's equality and bled them almost dry while they opted for self-interest.

Women still earn, on average, only three-quarters of the average male wage, just as they did in the mid-70s, but within that statistic lies the secret of Mrs Thatcher's success. The majority of women on low pay have become very much *more* impoverished since then, while the minority at the top are, literally, off on their own. According to the British Institute of Management, male directors earn an average of £45,828 while women directors are now on £41,000 and fast closing the gap. What better proof of Mrs Thatcher's dictum that it is all up to the individual? Cue the Volkswagen ad.

Greedy panache

Volkswagen GTIs begin at around £10,000 and while women may influence the decision to buy, they are mainly purchased by men. Our heroine of the mews in the commercial is no financially independent woman; she clearly leaves *his* house, jettisons *his* baubles and dumps *his* coat. But she has definitely read the 'stand on your own two feet' communiqué in the divide-and-rule society because what does she then do? She nicks her lover's car.

And so desirable a 'quality' has greed become in the 'new morality' that we, the viewers, are expected to look on not in horror or contempt but in admiration. Of course, it would have been a different matter altogether if, with equal panache, she'd stolen his giro cheque — but that's only a measure of how divided we've become.

'Advertising reflects rather than shapes social values in society,' said Tubby Pitcher in 1980 when president of the International Advertising Association. Volkswagen woman has no children, no commitment, no conscience, no basis in truth. But the advertisers know that she mirrors something all too strong in society. 'Underneath they're all Lovable . . .,' says a sexist ad which had its heyday in the '70s. In the '80s, given license by the New Right, we're discovering that, underneath, (male and female) we are *anything* but . . . □

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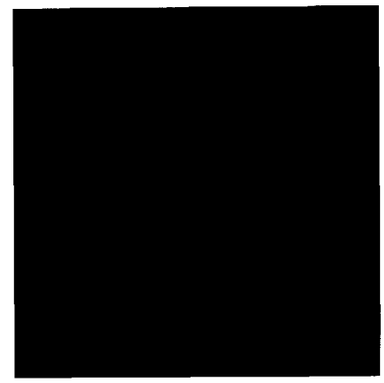
This square is white. By the time you reach the bottom of the page you'll agree or you'll be dead.



The square is of course black, but in certain countries that's not what's important. What matters is that you conform, and to make you conform the State has only one weapon. Fear.

Article 19 of The International Bill of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

You are one of the few prepared to speak out against the State. For a while, you appear to get away with it. But eventually they catch up with you. Initially it's just harassment, threats and phone calls. It's usually enough.

To continue to speak out against the State at this stage takes enormous moral courage.

Your continued writings don't go unnoticed and this time they decide to arrest you. It is not the proverbial knock at the door at four in the morning; you're simply 'lifted' from the street in full public view. (It serves as a useful warning to anyone else who may be thinking the same dangerous thoughts).

Article 9 states that no-one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest.

You're held for a week or so in solitary, you're not sure exactly how long. Your only visitors are the prison guards who seem free to beat you whenever they choose. You're deprived of water, food and sleep; and are surprised when, after a final beating, you're thrown into the street.

You know that from now on your life, and the lives of your family and friends will be in constant danger.

What colour is the square?

It seems incredible that there are individuals who, in the face of enormous personal risk, are yet prepared to campaign against the most barbaric regimes. Your struggle continues.

Now you try to hide your actions, holding secret meetings and writing under assumed names. But you are already very well known to the authorities and naturally they don't need evidence for your subsequent re-arrest. Indeed they don't need any for your trial. You don't get one.

Article 10 states that everyone is entitled ... to a fair and public hearing.

The State has finally lost patience with you. You've disappeared. Your family don't know whether you're alive or dead. You no longer exist.

What colour is the square?

But you are still alive; just. Your body is a map of fresh scar tissue and electrical burns. Your one meal a day is rancid. It's too dark to remove all the insects from it. Despite horrific injuries your torture continues.

It seems your activities were having some effect outside. The only reason you are still alive is that you have names and information that the State wants.

Article 5 states that no-one shall be subjected to torture.

To have your fingernails torn out or the soles of your feet beaten is merely to be softened up in an age where methods of torture are as varied as they are hideous. The gruesome reality is that few survive unless they surrender the information sought.

You've come face to face with man at his most evil. You're at the mercy of State functionaries prepared to commit indescribable atrocities.
Yet your only crime was to have an opinion that ran contrary to that of the State and to share it with your friends.

Now your only possible escape is to give their names to your torturers: to subject them to all that you have endured.

Even if you do that you still have no guarantee that your torture will cease or that you will ever be released. If you remain silent, you will die. The choice is yours.

What colour is the square?

Article 1 states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Since 1961 Amnesty International have striven to advance the cause of human rights throughout the world.

They have always relied entirely on voluntary contributions.

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The friendly mask of 'flexibility'

Struggles for shorter working hours have had low priority for British trade unions.* HILARY WAINWRIGHT *contrasts this with the far-reaching debates seen in Western Europe

WHAT WAS MOST remarkable about the postworkers' brief moment in the headlines was that scarcely anyone drew attention to the utter modesty of their claim — to reduce a 43-hour week to 40 hours.

This is a sign both of media indifference and the low priority which British trade unionists give to shorter working hours — one of the major issues of our time. So, too, is the incredulity with which most trade union leaders regard the National Union of Mineworkers' stand against compulsory weekend working. Claims for shorter working hours— like genuinely equal pay or improvements in health and safety — are the first to fall off bargaining agendas, even in the better organised workplaces and even when management is introducing labour-saving technologies. You hardly need a hand on which to count the exceptions: the post office engineers won a 37-hour week in 1978 and the engineers an hour in 1979 (mainly used as extra overtime).

Trade union inertia has meant that wider socialist thinking on working time has never gathered momentum. Periodically, organisations of socialist economists and technologists have set up study groups — often with a strong impetus from socialist feminists. But without a real, material focus, they have fizzled out.

On the continent, however, trade union action for shorter working hours and the creation of new jobs has given practical impetus to far-reaching philosophical and political debate. 'Our campaign for the 35-hour week heralded a whole new phase in the politics of working hours,' comments Helmut Schauer, a negotiator with I G Metall, the West German metalworkers' union.

If, as I will illustrate, the practical cutting edge of the debate in Western Europe comes from conflicts in the workplace, its social imagination is extended by the involvement of eco-socialists from the various Green parties, socialist feminists, and others from radical socialist parties independent of social democracy.

These participants express a wider environmental awareness and cultural dissatisfaction which has focused, at least in part, on the distribution and control of work. Schauer stresses the importance of this cultural exchange, quoting a remark of Theodore Adorno (the late Frankfurt marxist) that 'if a spark of reflection were allowed to be kindled in our free time, it could rapidly spread to the world of work and result in a conflagration'.

Another influential German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, has also argued that social movements around 'life style' — the effort to democratise family and cultural life — are becoming a more important catalyst for change than the traditional socialist organising around the struggle at the workplace. In recent years, however, there's been an interaction between these two spheres of life. 'It was the metal workers' strike for shorter hours', says eco-socialist and West German Green MEP Frieder Otto Wolf, 'which led us to pay attention to issues of work in concrete rather than just philosophical ways. And it brought us closer to the unions'. 'Conflagrations' at work have given a focus and an impetus to reflections on life style and culture.

> ***'They say they're giving us a reduction in hours, but on the weekends we do work we'll have to put in more hours. We'll have a Saturday off every five weeks or so, but we won't have any choice. I won't be planning weekends with my wife any more, they'll be doing it for us'***
>
> **Newcastle postman**

The decisive conflagration of recent years came in 1984 when over one million German metal workers took militant strike action to reduce their 40-hour week to 35 with no loss of pay. 'The worst industrial unrest suffered by West Germany in decades', in the words of the *Financial Times*, this seven-week-long strike came after years of sacrifice for the sake of national economic recovery. The workers were reacting to the growth of technological unemployment. The final deal involved an immediate reduction to a 38½-hour week and a commitment to a progressive reduction to 35. Since the strike, 100,000 new jobs in engineering have been created by the reduction in hours.

Not a victory, nevertheless a potent focus for those in the metalworkers' union who are determined to achieve the full reduction, and more. 'When we get to 35, we'll go for 30', says Joe Durber, a steel worker from the Ruhr. And on present trends — as high rates of labour productivity combine with slowing rates of overall growth — it will require redistributing working hours on the basis of 20 hours a week to eliminate unemployment — now at nearly 10 per cent. The next claim is for 37½ hours and factory leaders are already planning warning strikes after Christmas.

Other German unions are following the example of the metalworkers. They have opened a small but significant crack in employers' control over the huge increases in labour productivity typical of Germany's manufacturing industry. In response, the Kohl government is doing its best to enable the corporations to regain control. New labour laws will make a repetition of the 1984 strike difficult.

But a more lethal threat to the movement to redistribute hours so as to enrich the lives of workers and their families comes from the major multinational employers. It comes, as it has just come to the post workers in Britain, under the friendly mask of 'flexibility'.

To get around the reduction in hours, employers are seeking to introduce round-the-clock, round-the-week shift systems, taking on more casual workers and raising the tempo of work — all to ensure maximum use of the machinery. Where they succeed, workers may put in fewer hours, but they lose control or protection over which hours they work, and therefore over their weekends and evenings. The loss of what little control they had over when they take their free time and how they use it undermines the whole point of the struggle for shorter hours in the first place.

In response to this restructuring of work, the push for shorter working time has moved beyond the issue of the equal *distribution* of paid work to take on the problem of *control* of the time spent in paid work and its relation to free or personal time. (Though the distribution of work remains the major impetus for trade union action to reduce hours, the two issues are inseparable.) Some writers and policymakers — for example Ralf Dahrendorf — have focused on the first without delving far into the second. As a result, they fall too easily for the corporate rhetoric of 'flexibility'. They assume it extends workers' choice, whereas in the lived experience of workers it narrows choice.

The work of eco-socialists like Frieder Wolf, cultural marxists like Habermas and socialist feminists like Frigga Haug, of *Das Argument*, the West German journal, has proved to be more relevant to the problems of resisting management's encroachments on workers' personal priorities. For the issue of control over working time raises fundamental questions of the role of work in people's lives — how can labour be a means to personal fulfilment rather than a source of alienation?

Questions raised by feminists have been

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particularly important to the growing scepticism about the flexibility modern managers demand. The experience of women — both as mothers and as (badly) paid workers — jars sharply with the benevolent connotations of the term. Flexibility has not given mothers new opportunities to share childcare and enjoyment of their children with fathers newly liberated by working fewer hours. Instead, they continue to bear the burden of childcare responsibility as shift work makes it impossible for the man to plan a regular commitment. There is less — not more — chance of a convivial family life when the father's working and sleeping arrangements are externally decided.

Flexibility for women workers has meant less protection against the abuse of part-time contracts and a significant increase in poverty among women. Sociologist Carola Muller has highlighted this in a major survey of women involved with flexible work arrangements in Cologne.

Feminists stress two points: first, shorter working hours must be based on a decent minimum wage; second, negotiations for reduced working hours must take into account the variety of people's living arrangements and not assume a traditional nuclear family.

In many continental countries, West Germany in particular, these questions are not simply the stuff of seminars among socialist intellectuals. They are live issues debated by a minority of trade union activists and officials who mean to act. Take Ingrid Kurz-Sherf, who works in the Social and Economic Research Institute alongside the DGB (the German TUC): 'Those of us responsible for contributing to a new policy on working hours are faced with the question of how, collectively, to defend and assert people's needs for their free time against the time logic of profit, while at the same time enabling the full variety and variability of individual personal needs to be met'.

She and others have been working on model collective agreements which enable individuals to make their own choices rather than assume or impose some notion of normality. They are seeking both to make collective bargaining protect standards against capital's pressures for total flexibility and at the same time respond to individual needs.

In Britain, management in engineering, and now in the Post Office, has tried to pre-empt any conflagration over hours by offering small reductions in hours tied to flexibility agreements. The engineering unions, deeply divided, have turned the offer down, against the wishes of the electricians' union, EETPU, and leading members of the AUEW. But British trade unionists remain largely isolated from the debates influencing, and being influenced by, trade unionists elsewhere in Europe.

Are there any signs of change? At one of the workshops at the socialist conference at Chesterfield last month, 200 people at the trade union workshop on working hours listened to an I G Metall member talk alongside the head ofthe NUM's research department, a leading left EETPU activist, and local activists in the UCW. A straw in the wind perhaps. But the experience of unions like the German metalworkers holds many lessons for British workers who are trying to put into effect the grand resolutions that trade union conferences pass on the nod. □

Hilary Wainwright will be discussing the European left experience with Frieder Otto Wolf at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, at 7.30pm on 14 January.

'THE DEMOCRATS'

Tower Hamlets tragedy

PATRICK CURRY ***warns of the inherent dangers when Liberals turn into populists***

LIBERALS at their Assembly in September had an unsettling experience. It was possible to turn a blind eye to cries of 'Liberal racism!' (a whole new concept, for many), but reassurance that these accusations were indeed all lies — whether sought privately or in meetings — was simply not forthcoming.

The problem was, and is, a group of young Liberal councillors who found themselves in charge of Tower Hamlets council in London's East End after the last local elections in 1986. They were soon the centre of controversy for the racial implications of their tough housing policies. One councillor answered an accusatory letter in the *Guardian* by asserting: 'We have no racist policies . . . To suggest otherwise is totally without foundation and a lie.' Another, Eric Flounders (also the Alliance parliamentary candidate), described accusations of racism as 'complete rubbish, made by idiots and believed only by idiots.' And in a now notorious letter to a freelance journalist, responding to the latter's expression of concern over housing policies, Jeremy Shaw — then chair of housing — replied: 'Dear Sir, since you wish to believe the lies masquerading as news without even first bothering to discover the facts, you deserve to remain as ignorant, naive and bigoted as you evidently are.'

This has led some Liberals to conclude that the problems in Tower Hamlets are simply a result of appalling public relations. Suspicions of something more substantive amiss, however, were unallayed by a fraught Assembly fringe meeting. One Liberal leader of a major housing charity piously urged councillors to 'discharge their duties under law as far as possible' and Simon Hughes MP — most uncharacteristically — was forced to wriggle and stall.

So, has the Liberal administration in Tower Hamlets initiated or enforced housing policies that are effectively racist? As a Liberal, I believe that *the immigrant community in Tower Hamlets has indeed a genuine grievance against the Liberal council*. Furthermore, it should not be wished away as a mere local aberration, an example of Liberal lunacy; rather, it points to a deeper danger in modern British Liberalism.

Clearly those running Tower Hamlets are faced with tremendous inner-city problems — most of which are not of their own making, but the result of vicious Tory rate-capping plus cynical Labour mismanagement. I am also aware those leading the protests against Tower Hamlets Liberals include many members of the Labour Party; and that not all of those asking to be housed there are really entitled to be. Unfortunately, none of this overturns my central assertion.

The incriminating evidence is the test case brought before the High Court by Tower Hamlets council, in which it successfully argued that 56 Bangladeshi families seeking accommodation there had rendered themselves 'intentionally homeless', and are therefore not entitled to be housed under the provisions of the 1985 Housing Act. As the UK Immigrants Advisory Service has pointed out — and as the Liberal councillors know perfectly well — this 'is nonsensical, since it is logically impossible for such families to avail themselves of the right to family unity that they have under immigration law, unless in the process they leave their homes in Bangladesh.'

In short, what we find is an entirely new interpretation of that Act, which will now be taken up and used exclusively against immigrants (read non-whites) by other councils and which was pioneered and steered through the courts by *Liberals*. That is a scandal and a disgrace.

There is also the matter of funding for voluntary bodies. It is impossible not to notice Tower Hamlets Liberals' cuts or withdrawal of council funding for an array of groups, all with an obvious concern in common: the TH Association for Racial Equality, the Homeless Families Campaign, the Race and Housing Action Team. I would have thought that an area with such severe problems in these matters could have used *better*-assisted groups, not punitively crippled ones.

How far can you go and still call yourself a Liberal? I find it extremely hard to see how the actions just described assist 'the various cultures of mankind (sic) [to] develop freely without being warped by . . . racial . . . antagonism'; or help 'to create the positive conditions which will make a full and free life possible for all, regardless of colour . . .' (preamble to the Liberal party constitution).

What is happening in Tower Hamlets with race and housing is partly so disturbing because it seems to stem, in some measure, from good Liberal principles: community politics and local participation in power (where the white community and therefore *potential* racist vote 'just happens' to outnumber the rest). This, I suggest, is not accidental. Every political position has its inherent dangers, and that of Liberalism is populism: the unprincipled exploitation of a localised 'democratic' mandate, which runs roughshod over the needs and rights of minorities in the name of the people. As such, racism is one of its first and foremost results. Another, if lesser, is philistinism. (I haven't even discussed Tower Hamlets' cuts in arts funding.) And there is another aspect to this potential: in areas where Labour is the chief electoral opponent, the tendency — if unchecked — is for Liberals to become crypto-Tories.

What can be done? It is now the duty of Liberals *publicly to disown these housing policies*. I would also urge Liberals to refrain from supporting Tower Hamlets Liberals in elections and by-elections.

More generally, Tower Hamlets is a lesson for the Liberal Party and its successor in the need for clear policy directives, firmly based on non-negotiable Liberal principles. Then, perhaps, we can get on with offering the kind of genuinely democratic and left-of-centre answer to Thatcherism that is our proper business. □

Patrick Curry is Chair of Addison and Brook Green Liberal Association, Hammersmith.

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A dangerous model for the Third World

As another full-scale famine develops in Ethiopia, **PAUL HIGHFIELD** *reports from a school behind Eritrean lines on why food has become a political weapon*

IT IS unfortunately true that the majority of people donating to the current Ethiopian famine fund know little about the politics in the region, or that much of the famine could have been averted.

The overriding objective of the Ethiopian regime, led by Colonel (now President) Mengistu and backed by the USSR, has been to consolidate its version of a Marxist state and destroy the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. The EPLF controls 75 per cent of Eritrea, an area illegally annexed to Ethiopia in 1961 by Haile Selassie. It asks for a UN supervised referendum, so that Eritreans can decide between autonomy, federation or full independence. Mengistu has time and again refused to negotiate; instead he spreads the fiction that the EPLF are a small bunch of bandits, while devoting most of the resources of Africa's second largest armed forces to destroying them.

Far from being bandits, the EPLF is really a government in exile, with extensive civilian departments in health, education, agriculture, transport and so on. It has opened 140 schools in the past ten years, a figure which would be far higher were it not for the war. In the northern base area lies the Zero School, where I have worked since November 1986, training EPLF English teachers.

It is a strange school by any standards. For one thing, it takes nearly two hours to walk from one end to the other. Because of air raids by Ethiopian MiG 23s and Antonov bombers (which killed five children in 1985), the school is strung along a collection of narrow mountain valleys, hidden by trees, or underground. Every building is camouflaged, including my small house.

The school houses 3,500 children, of whom about 1,000 have lost both parents and all relatives in the war. Their days are always busy. Up by 5.30am, they have milk and maybe powdered protein or bread for breakfast, then set off to safer valleys for the day's lessons. They learn their first language (there are nine different nationalities in Eritrea), plus English, maths and science as compulsory subjects.

As you'd expect, some children are war traumatised. Many, for instance, have seen their parents bayoneted to death in front of them. They get some emotional support from parental figures, teachers and other full-time guardians — not enough by any means — but they also get a lot from each other. Children here also have other responsibilities from a very early age — walking seven-hour return treks to the mountains to get firewood; carrying huge sacks of bread or flour from the bakery, where they help to bake bread; looking after the small vegetable gardens. But they play hard as well, with home-made footballs (popular with girls too), contributing to the art club, or singing and dancing.

We are 1200 metres up, so in winter it gets cold at night. Most children may have blankets, but not jumpers; an early morning wind whistling through the valleys helps ensure many colds. Malaria gets bad after the summer rains: yet I have never seen a child complain about her or his living conditions. Some of my student teachers also got malaria, but were back in class usually within two days, not wanting to miss a thing. The inadequate diet does lead to fatigue caused by vitamin deficiencies, a condition partly offset by extraordinary reserves of commitment and dedication.

> ***People around the world are beginning to wake up to the profound injustices Eritreans have suffered at the hands of the Italians, British, Ethiopians and superpowers. They see here a new model for Third World development, based on self-reliance in a sharing society***

The three-month summer vacation is a chance for younger children to go and stay with relatives and for the teachers to learn on the summer course, designed to improve their academic standards in English, maths, biology, physics and chemistry. The older children go to the various EPLF civilian departments for work experience, maybe improving their auto mechanic skills, or working in the central hospital pharmacy, which produces a wide range of antibiotics, creams and syrups to reduce dependence on Western drug companies.

Once the new academic year starts, rain will be almost nil until April. In 1987 the rain fell at the wrong time in the highlands, locusts devastated pasture, and a full-scale famine will have developed by the time you read this. Once again, food has become a political weapon in the West's strategy of winning over Ethiopia, a strategy which excludes Eritrean self-determination. Contrary to some press reports, the Ethiopian regime *has* been sending ammunition and troops out with the UN food convoys, and pressurising aid agencies to accept this gross interference. Unfortunately, the official in charge of the UN operation in Ethiopia has done precisely that. The EPLF has no intention of disrupting genuine aid supplies, even if destined for people out of its control: its ceasefire proposal in 1984-85, plus actions over the years, are evidence of this. Yet it has been blamed for a legitimate attack on a convoy which contained not only food but also weapons for use by the Ethiopian army against both the EPLF and the civilian population. The coming year will be hard, though through organisation and commitment the Eritreans will survive it, but many needless deaths may result if food aid is withheld from EPLF areas.

Care and respect

Zero school is a future Eritrea; a caring, sharing community which respects all its members. For half a day at weekends everyone engages in collective work, maybe to build a new clinic, or sort out and classify secondhand books. Music is an important part of Eritrean culture — most nights you can hear a group of children singing and dancing to a drum and the traditional five-stringed karar.

One of the children's favourite cultural groups is not Eritrean, but one made up of the freed Ethiopian prisoners of war who live in the area. The freed prisoners number 3,000; they cannot return to Ethiopia, as they would be shot (imagine the political impact if they explained what's really happening in Eritrea). They look after themselves, have literacy classes, even play football in the EPLF league. The 10,000 not yet freed are looked after out of the EPLF's resources, receiving the same food rations as everyone else. There is much discontent in the serving Ethiopian army about the Eritrean war. 1986 saw a mutiny in the NE Sahel sector; but officers know that any talk favouring a political solution to the war results in immediate execution, a fact verified by a recently released Ethiopian colonel.

So what future is in store for the prisoners, and the schoolchildren? The EPLF is unique among liberation movements in having fought a regime backed first by the USA and now by the USSR. They are struggling for self-determination, for a society where women can own land and be full citizens; where nomads and peasants can read and write and use appropriate technology to improve their lives, free of Western control; where killer diseases, high infant mortality and low life expectancy are a thing of the past, not an ever present threat; where democracy means that villagers or town dwellers, and not the IMF or USSR, control their own lives. The USA doesn't want this model: it's too dangerous, other countries might follow it; the USSR doesn't want it either — *glasnost* hasn't spread to Soviet foreign policy here, even though it verbally criticises the Ethiopian regime's extreme collectivist agricultural policy, a policy which has undoubtedly led to an enormous number of deaths in the past famine. The UN does nothing to promote dialogue. Yet people around the world are beginning to wake up to the profound injustices Eritreans have suffered at the hands of the Italians, British (for eleven years), Ethiopians and superpowers. They see here a new model for Third World development, based on self-reliance and low-level technology, in a sharing society. The Zero schoolchildren will be among those ensuring that this becomes a countrywide reality, however long it takes. □

Paul Highfield is an English teacher trainer at the Zero School, Eritrea.

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Adventures in the Soho skin trade

MELISSA BENN *reports her own feelings on seeing pornographic images and argues against the anti-porn feminists' view that pornography directly produces male violence towards women*

A GROUP of women sit apprehensively in a darkened room, watching huge images of other women thrown up onto a blank white wall. Among the 70 slides shown, they see:

◯ a woman's head hair and pubic hair is shaved off, prior to her being strapped by her arms and legs into a chair, and sexually tortured until dead. By the end shot in the sequence, her head is lolling on her neck, her mouth and her vagina agape: she is simultaneously orgasmic and dead.

◯ a large wispy haired, sad-looking woman looks sadly to camera, a rope tied so tightly round one breast that the flesh has ballooned outwards, and looks detached from her body: the same woman looks down blankly at a steel instrument which has been passed right through the flesh of her breast and the pink of her nipple.

◯ a woman wearing nothing but a black coat swings from a tree, hanged by the neck.

◯ a 'geisha girl' services a customer; she is masturbating him. In the last image the man (whose face we never see) is coming directly into the woman's face. Holding his penis, her face is screwed up. She is scared, gagging.

These pictures, assembled by an American anti-pornography feminist group, are now being shown over here as part of a nascent Campaign Against Pornography. Watching the slides, women often get upset, turn away, say *no* to the pain of what they see suffered up there on the white wall. It is impossible not to feel part of a collective female eye — horrified, hurt and angry. It is also difficult not to agree with the slide 'facilitator' (who gives a running analytic commentary throughout) that what we are seeing is a form of woman hatred — if not quite an organised male conspiracy, then certainly an exhibition of male power at its worst. Glimmers of sexual arousal are quickly suppressed in the name of false consciousness and a true gender solidarity.

Contrast this with a visit, as a lone woman, to some of the seedier sex magazine and video shops in London's Kings Cross and Soho. Male space of the purest kind, yes, but much less hostile than you'd expect. Much less hostile than a pub, for instance. This is precisely because pornography is not on the whole something men do together: it is not part of a collective male culture (like drinking, sport . . .). The very existence of these shops and the material in them are testament to the most individual, privatised form of consumption: each to his own, his own specialism, his own price range, his own fantasy, his own shame.

'Homely models enact the most clichéd of scenes' (page from *Colour Climax*, £10)

It's male space in another way, too: all the shops are so drab, so badly kept up, selling so much out-of-date stuff, so old-fashioned. There are ranks of old paperbacks next to the shelves stuffed with pornographic titles: in the Kings Cross shop, the only other person in there is flicking through Douglas Hurd's spy thriller *Send Him Victorious*.

In the Soho shop, specialising in transvestism and 'hard' gay (pornography is as rigidly classified as an exam syllabus), there is as much shelf space devoted to big colour pic biographies of Prince Andrew (before Fergie). In the shop across the road, it's model railways and angling manuals.

To the men serving in such shops a punter is a

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punter. You can be a woman in a baseball jacket or your more archetypal acidic smelling bloke in a Gannex. The men serving are clearly used to people who come in trying to look like they don't exist. Their manner is alternately jaunty or bored: they don't look you in the eye if you don't want them to: but they haggle with everyone — male or female. So that I get offered under-the-counter material, hardcore videos 'with a bit of everything, love . . . very meaty' and good reductions if I bought over £25 worth — and half off the next batch when I returned.

This is all explained by the sheer expense of pornography — possible precisely because of the very privatised nature of purchase and consumption: the self-willed fragmentation of the market. The usual price for a single magazine is £10 or £12, and £24.95 for three. Rip-offs are common, and hard to guard against. A £25 hardcore video sold to a friend of mine in a Soho shop entitled *Color Climax* was revealed, on slotting into the VHS, to be *Emmanuelle goes to Cannes* — a tedious softcore travelogue you could probably rent from any high street video shop.

A sense of my being, somehow, 'the male eye' continues on looking at some of the pornography: three quite ordinary examples of 'hard het' entitled *Color Climax, Foxy Lady* and *Baby Dolls*. Inside the booklets (A5 size) are either single women spread to camera, or flimsily constructed scenarios of lust/desire which remind me more than anything of those in the Longmans French textbooks we used to have at school. Minus the sex.

Homely models enact the most clichéd of scenes; a big-breasted blonde secretary seduces her boss (after some agile and unusual use of the office photocopying facilities); a music pupil is given a blow job by his older female music teacher; a nurse sits on the face of a clearly not-that-badly injured male patient . . . Apart from the initial surprise at seeing so much genitalia — usually three people, sometimes even five, crowd out the page — these images are neither particularly arousing nor particularly humiliating. Men and women are as equally active in the sex act. If anything, the women are more predatory: seducers, enjoyers and punishers all in one. The men look rather forlorn.

So how can the two 'kinds' of viewing be matched up? The one which sees pornography as both dangerous and degrading to women — a form of sex discrimination; the other, which sees much of this material as drab, static imagery, as utilitarian — and to employ an old-style liberal argument — essentially harmless?

Men's rotting psyche

The first view has been cogently argued among feminists for years — most notably by Andrea Dworkin, the American anti-porn feminist, and, over here, by revolutionary feminists. But the debate is about to be widened by the formation of a new Campaign Against Pornography — due to be launched in the new year — which draws in much wider support, particularly among labour movement women; the campaign has the wholehearted support of feminist MPs Clare Short and Jo Richardson. Plans for the campaign include a nationwide day of action against pornography and several pieces of draft legislation, including a 'Pornography and Sex Discrimination Bill'.

'If anything, the women are more predatory: seducers, enjoyers and punishers'

Broadly speaking, anti-porn feminists (as I shall call them) seem to me to have two strong points. The first lies in their energetic refusal to forget the women (and children, and men) who are forced to act in pornography against their will. It is quite unacceptable that anyone be required to suffer pain and humiliation to produce 'pleasure' for somebody else. Any moves to protect such unwilling participants should be supported in just the same way as any form of worker protection law or practice is promoted.

Secondly, there are the links that exist between pornography and woman hating. By this I mean it is impossible to look at a picture of a woman being tortured or beaten and not to see in that some reflection of the deepest fear and hatred, mixed up with desire, that men have for women — and which any women who has walked alone down more than two streets in her life knows exists.

But to see such images as a symptom of a deep-rooted, deep-rotting attitude within men's psyche is quite different from arguing that pornography *produces* such an attitude. Which is what anti-porn feminism does — quite explicitly. It argues that pornography is both cause and symptom of women's poor economic, employment and domestic situation: it also argues it as a precipitating cause of actual violence against women. It is here that anti-porn feminism begins to get on weak ground. The explicit connection between pornography and real-life violence has been a source of irritable argument within feminism for years. But such connections have never been satisfactorily proven. (*Everywoman*, the feminist magazine, and supporters of the new campaign, are planning to publish *Pornography and Sexual Violence: evidence of the links* early in the new year, based on evidence assembled by Dworkin in the United States).

Such an argument also begs the question: why when so much porn is about women doing violence to men, don't women go out and sexually attack men? A lot of heterosexual sado-masochist (SM) porn currently on the market is actually about women dominating men. In an SM martial arts video I saw, the woman handcuffs the man to a bed, whips him, and then proceeds to suffocate him with a plastic bag, sitting in a chair watching him die. It is the fashionable thing for women to be the dominatrix.

But there are more hidden assumptions in anti-porn feminism which we should be vary careful of — and which I'm not sure that even they are aware of arguing. These concern women's sexuality and sexual desires.

The makers and showers of the anti-pornography slide show referred to earlier assume absolutely that women should not get turned on by pornography. Question 4 of the questionnaire which accompanies the slide show asks: 'Did you find any of the material *sexually* arousing?' It then adds: 'Remember . . . that everyone is *socially conditioned* to feel sexual arousal in response to certain images, so you need feel no shame if the *sexual conditioning* has affected you as it has everyone else' [my emphases]. Cathy Itzin, a leading light on the working party currently shaping CAP, has argued that pornography is a form of 'addiction' — akin to addiction to alcohol and cigarettes: an addiction to which women, like men, can fall prey. While it may be true that there are many men with caseloads of naked women under their beds, and that consumption leads to more consumption, the addiction parallel seems to

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me suspect. You cannot — or should not — compare sensual pleasures with a hedonism that involves harmful substances.

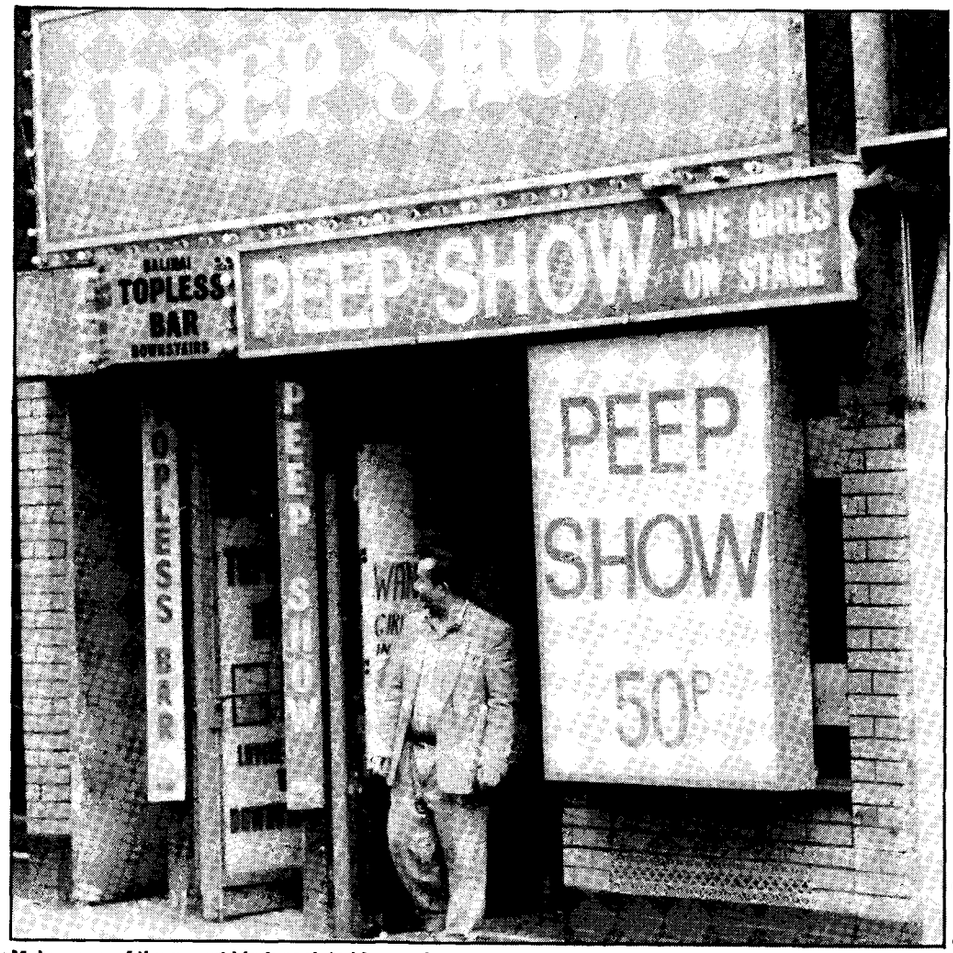
It also suggests a form of 'moral purity' feminism which has echoes of both the American and British 19th century women's movement. It suggests a belief that there is a 'good' form of arousal (women's — but by what?) and a 'bad' form (men's — by porn). And yet as anybody who has done the most minor bit of thinking and talking on pornography will know, most women will admit to being aroused by pornography. And why not?

Silences

Opponents of anti-porn feminism are rightly implacable in their renunciation of such assumptions. The independent film-maker Mandy Rose spent several months in America. For her, anti-porn feminism leads to 'the creation of yet more silences and suppression about sex. Women should be allowed the freedom to seek out, to consume and buy images that we find sexually exciting. Although porn is in many ways flawed, and particularly for women, the fact is that porn is the only sphere that exists for a non-moralistic exploration of women's sexual fantasy and desire'.

Andrea Dworkin was invited to speak at October's ACTT (the cinema and television technicians' union) national women's conference. ACTT members who oppose Dworkin said how hard it was to speak against her. 'She creates this kind of emotional wave, so that women at the end of her speech tend simply to say: God! I don't know what to do.' But Rose, who did speak against her, says of Dworkin's performance at that conference: 'What she said was especially inappropriate for a conference of independent, professional women. Dworkin takes a pornographic image as a kind of world view: the law on the top, men in the middle, women at the bottom. But I don't see an image of a woman being penetrated in the missionary position as symbolic of a woman as a *victim*'.

The question that anti-porn feminists don't seem to be raising at all is: what are we going to do about women's sexuality? How are we going to promote women's right to find out about what they like sexually? Certainly, pornography is an imperfect way of doing it. But women need to turn the discussion away from seeing pornography purely as a representation of the terrible things men do to women — and so distract our attention away from the very concrete ways in which victims of male violence can be helped and all women protected.



Camera Press

Male space of the purest kind: each to his own fantasy, his own price range

The passion with which the counter arguments are expressed indicates a potentially unbridgeable polarity between two 'world views' among feminists about pornography, women's sexuality — and most crucial of all — priorities within feminist politics. On the one side, you have women, like Itzin, Short and Richardson who are deeply convinced that the male pornography industry degrades women, and that its existence is a core cause of sex discrimination. They feel it in their gut. Itzin is determined that any plans for a 'Sex Discrimination and Pornography Bill' should make the argument on new terms and not fall into the old censorship trap. But there will still be widespread hostility among other feminists to their fundamental aim of eradicating pornography. Opposition comes principally from a group of urbane libertarian feminists. It is a neat irony that their reasons for rejecting porn's central place in feminist thinking or strategy should so echo the conclusions of Bernard Williams, the liberal voice in the long-running porn debate. In 1983 he wrote: 'When one is confronted with what is still the pervasive, lying and destructive sexism of almost all our popular culture, to go on about the particular nuisance of pornography is largely a diversion to a more traditional and much less significant target'. □

ARE YOU TRYING TO BE FUNNY, SIR.?!
NO, I ONLY...
YOU ONLY NOTHING! IF YOU DON'T WATCH OUT YOU'RE GOING TO REGRET EVER COMING HERE!!
WAIT A MINUTE, WAS THAT A THREAT?!
THREAT? THREAT? DID YOU HEAR A THREAT?
I DIDN'T. THREAT? DID YOU HEAR A THREAT?
LISTEN, I WANT TO SEE YOUR SUPERVISOR
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ARTS

CINEMA

In dreams

Judith Williamson

A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors (18)
General release

AT A PARTY last Saturday a complete stranger asked why I don't use this column to say which films are worth going to. To me, that seems as inappropriate as asking a geographer or geologist why they don't tell you where to go for your favourite holiday: my job — as I see it — isn't to provide a brochure of favourite beauty spots but to map out the ground and try to understand its construction. Different things are 'worth seeing' to different people for different reasons; the mainly middle-class, leftish professionals who most often ask me that question usually have in mind a meaningful art movie which will address what they see as 'relevant' issues at the same time as giving them pleasure.

But this is exactly what all cinema does, for someone. In particular the highly structured formats of genre films — the western, the thriller, the melodrama — offer ways of speaking about the concerns of a society while producing pleasure, in part through recognition and repetition of these structures, in precisely the audience in whom those concerns are most pressing.

Horror films are a particularly interesting genre, because they deal — by definition — with the unacceptable, the horrifying or 'unimaginable', and are thus able to speak in variously coded and structured ways about taboo issues that merely lurk off-screen in other genres. Since disgust is written into their very form, they provide an expression of feelings about what is seen as disgusting: sex, the workings of the body, physical decay and death. Inasmuch as disgust and fear are linked with transgression — and anthropologist Mary Douglas has suggested that dirt can be defined as that which is out of place — this also provides a way of speaking about boundaries, frequently those of class or race. In horror films, what can't be held in or kept down erupts like guts from the body or bones from the ground. This inability of things to stay buried in the horror genre has been characterised by Robin Wood's phrase 'The Return of the Repressed': a reference to Freud's theory that nothing repressed disappears, but resurfaces as symptoms. If this is true of what is buried in the individual psyche, it is also true socially: the past is felt in the present and the inhabitants of horror films are haunted by their repressed history.

A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors is the latest in a series which speaks about both sex and class — about what has been buried by a suburban American community. Along with films like *Halloween* it is both about and addressed to (despite its 18 certificate) adolescent kids — functioning as a B-side to the *Breakfast Club* or *Pretty in Pink* teen-problem movies. Adolescence is, of course, the time when sexuality almost literally erupts and in all the Elm Street movies this provides a hinge for the horrific events. The first starts when a girl invites her boyfriend to stay the night and is clawed to death in her sleep by a monster; the second turns to homophobic anxieties; but Part Three is perhaps the most interesting so far, involving not so much sexual fantasies as fantasies of bodily power, which ultimately enable some of the kids to overcome the monster.

Revenge of the working-class hero: Robert Englund as Freddy Krueger

He is the by now familiar figure of Freddy Krueger: the ex-janitor and child killer burned alive by Elm Street parents in a past act of gruesome vigilante-ism. With his battered hat and stripey jersey, Krueger is a kind of lumpen-proletarian figure — certainly the only 'worker' on Elm Street — whose 'place' is a boiler-room underground. In social terms it is possible to read Krueger as the unsavoury working classness suppressed and fought off by the aspiring, middle-American parents who are presented as at best inadequate — alcoholic mothers and dictatorial fathers abound. Freddy is *their* victim even as their children, in a vicious cycle of effects, are his.

The territory of Freddy's revenge is dreams, and the horror device which is these films' hallmark is the seamless welding of sleeping and waking reality, so that nightmare events turn out to be true. The atmosphere is permanently like that gluey moment when you try to tear yourself awake during a bad dream. Interestingly, this sensation is perfectly illustrated in the Samaritans ad playing with the film, which shows a head and hands trying to break through a sheet of some opaque plasticky substance with the caption: 'Is there anyone out there?'

It is not a coincidence that this ad plays with *Nightmare 3*. On its release the Samaritans and other organisations tried to blame it for teenage suicides; Alexander Walker attacked it in the *Evening Standard*, linking its depiction of violence to kids with the incidence of child abuse and claiming that it increased the 'horrendous stock of contemporary fears by victimising the family.'

The idea that films *add to* the 'stock' of fears in society is completely antithetical to my notion that films are required not only to express but in some

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way to deal with contemporary fears which already exist. *Nightmare 3* does indeed speak to the issue of child abuse, but in a very different way from that which Alexander Walker suggests. The Elm Street kids all experience something that no one else will acknowledge: this becomes the central issue in *Dream Warriors*, which brings back Nancy, a survivor of Part One, as the understanding 'dream therapist' who alone, in a modern psychiatric hospital, believes them because she has had the same experience herself. The kids are in hospital because Freddy's attacks on them in their sleep are *interpreted* by adults as suicide attempts: but this is hardly an invitation to suicide since the whole point is that they are fighting off Freddy, only nobody believes them. The strongest drive of the film is towards validation of the kids' experience, in explicit defiance of the head psychiatrist who claims they are perpetrating the violence on themselves and — in what is almost a re-run of the seduction-theory debate — blames the 'bad dreams' on 'guilt and moral conflicts'. She, like the unbelieving mother of one 'patient', is held accountable for the real deaths which follow. Freddy himself twice appears in the role of a bad father; the sense of abuse is underlined by the irresponsible behaviour of other adult characters, like the hospital attendant who tries to push drugs on a young junkie. Thus the teenagers have to look to each other and to Nancy for support; and *Dream Warriors* introduces to the series a more organised resistance.

Who can say which films are 'worth seeing' in the abstract? This is a film which deals in its generic fashion with a tangle of 'relevant issues' to its predominantly young audience, at the same time as providing the pleasure which brings them to the cinema in the first place. What is particularly striking is the way it unwaveringly takes their side against a repressive and unbelieving world of adult hypocrisy. □

THEATRE

On the road

Victoria Radin

Dreams of San Francisco
JACQUELINE HOLBOROUGH *Bush*
Waiting for Godot
SAMUEL BECKETT *Lyttelton*

WE HAVE NAMED our publishing houses and theatre groups Virago and Monstrous Regiment; we agree to wear scents called Opium and Poison. Is there no end to the nervous deprecation of women by women? Now Jacqueline Holborough, author of an earlier play about women in prison and founder of the feminist theatre group Clean Break, adds some silliness with **Dreams of San Francisco**.

Her played-out, fringe-of-the-fringe feminist theatre company, disconsolately touring the outer regions is, I take it, a metaphor for the clapped-out women's movement of the late 1980s. Her four performers and one roadie subsist on small, endlessly terminable grants and 'hospitality', or beds donated on condition that they spend the after-show hours discussing liberal causes. Into the foyer of their current venue, a 'Northern Arts Centre' — a term designed to inspire sheer terror in the hip thespian Bush audience — bursts an exhibition of 'rampant plaster pricks'. ('They're cruise missiles,' explains one of the troupe.) In another part of the building lurks the sexist bastard manager, invisible as are all the evening's males, who is apparently more than amenable to striking a sexual business deal with their ostensible 'collective's' leader. This nonchalant little barter is one of the more unattractive improbabilities of Holborough's comedy.

The other is a very elementary mistake, common to all farces that misfire, which is simply: these people are pitched at so base a level they have nowhere to fall. How could this group of women have got together in the first place? They seem like a company of misfits culled from the Theatreboard advertisements in *Time Out*. Polly (Sarah Winman) is a very young, very county virgin, with a pash on Daddy and dancing and a dipso mum in the family home where she still lives. Caroline (Joanna Monro), the group's 'token musician', is a hippy busker and shoplifter; Bony the roadie (Dawn Archibald) an androgynous, underage Glaswegian runaway who is wanted by the police for arson; Alex (Jenny Lecoat) a smooth, black-suit-wearing careerist: and Susan (Caroline Holdaway) a waffly actress who dreams of nothing more than a 'well-received cameo in a Russian classic in a decent playhouse'.

She is pushing 30 and terrified of her future and marvellously played by Holdaway with deadpan, ghoulish female irony, reciting her self-improving litany — 'Everything is coming to me; in the fullness of time' — while slouched in the clothes-strewn dressing-room over the sad reflections of a hand mirror. It is with this character that the author feels most comfortable: her plaint, 'What has the women's movement ever done for me? Enslaved me in the name of liberty', voices a sentiment which will not astonish any female member of the audience. Even in the last part of the 20th century that big question still needs the exploration Holborough doesn't provide. But, for a play which purportedly takes on feminism, the agenda hidden in that question is even more ripe for examination: that Susan is actually a lousy actress and got her meagre present position by riding on the back of the women's movement.

We see that this group never had more than Pavlovian notions of feminism, if any at all. Small wonder then that when we catch a tiny glimpse of their show — which, most undramatically, is all we get — it seems to be about fluffy girls in pastel romper suits pathetically singing that 'Women are striving'. The shock/horror of the evening's finale, in which the remaining members line up in attractive black frocks harmonising 'Blue Moon', is considerably diluted. In fact, their new act runs rings around the old one.

I doubt that that was Holborough's intention. I do think she wanted to say something about the lack of possibilities in Britain (though her titular San Francisco looms only as another joke), about lost people like Susan, also to extend more bravely the potential lesbian relationship between the roadie and the dancer. There is simply no other emotional investment in this play about, finally, friendship between women. It is directed, and very ably, by the male Simon Stokes and, in addition to Holdaway's, there are performances of the highest order from Joanna Monro as the beefy ex-busker with a wonderfully easy warmth and truthfulness (watch her take in the news that she's been sacked) and from Archibald as a pale-faced ET among roadies.

We all, those who have read it, have an ideal **Waiting for Godot** in the head, just as we have our own version of *Hamlet*. When we go to these plays, it is not only to see a run-through but to catch what different minds make of them. Director Michael Rudman plays Sam again in a most curious mode. His programme note asserting that 'only a production rooted in naturalism will work in Britain' baffled me. It was a threat he doesn't quite carry out: William Dudley's set of the mingiest tree under a psychotically blue sky seems a fantasia in polystyrene; the boy goatherd who comes with the message from Godot is wearing a prep school uniform and sounds like it. Having first read the play in Beckett's original French, I have always wondered about the French references in the nowhere country of the English text; and thought that it would be good to see it transposed to Ireland. Rudman doesn't do this, nor does he expound on the play's music-hall jokes and origins. It is a curiously colourless production, in which a sort of forced joviality replaces the burlesque, and querulousness the underlying anger and threat. Alec McCowen's Vladimir does a lot of foot-acting: bouncing on his heels, skipping and kicking, a fatally whimsical embodiment of a man determined that time should pass. John Alderton's Estragon is huge and grimy beside his littleness — a visually interesting double act but one which makes nothing of their stated 50 years' connection. Colin Welland, got up like a fairground busker, lacks the grandeur one hopes of the sadistic Pozzo and snarls Beckett's beautiful lines about being born astride the grave nearly inaudibly. Peter Wright gives the slave Lucky's deconstructed babble in a sonorous baritone — which expanded my view of the character (is he a *clochard* who used to teach at the College de France? are all intellectuals abased by bullies?) while adding a wanting vocal depth to the evening.

It is the NT's first *Godot*, a play which is anyway a rare event in London, and may well be the first production for many of the spectators. That is why this timid and mimsy-English staging made me so sad. The first night audience received it with awe and incomprehension. □

VIDEO

In from the cold

Felicity Sparrow

VIDEO, PREVIOUSLY the ruffian on the stairs, was finally allowed into the hallowed halls of last month's 31st **London Film Festival**. With the help of overhead projection, small-screen productions got the big-screen treatment, enabling them to be viewed in reassuringly familiar format by the aficionados of celluloid. So will the ruffian be a bona-fide tuxedoed guest in festivals to come?

With only a 20-year history to its name, video has grown up quite separate from its older sibling.

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Lacking the theory and criticism afforded to cinema productions it has evolved as a counter-culture, the bad sister of television and a medium for artists and politicos — its relative cheapness giving rise to the assumption that people made videos out of necessity rather than choice. This poor-relation attitude still prevails, but it is changing thanks to the more widespread use of video, in education, at work and in the home. The fact that it's the lucrative home video industry which maintains and supports the status quo of the Hollywood multinationals — where more and more 'films' are made for the video market — has done little to endear video to the film world. Independent video, which should have a lot going for it, is still way behind its commercial counterpart and yet fails to command the respect afforded to independent film. And, with scant resources for production and marketing, it has received little recognition outside of art galleries. The British Film Institute's recent acknowledgement of video and involvement in its production has gone some way to raise the profile of independent video and the LFF's tardy acceptance of the medium owes much to this.

Of course video has had its own festivals but these haven't received the media hype — and thus potentially wider audiences — of the LFF. So the much touted events of last month did indeed mark video's first step out of the cold. The declared theme of the selections on offer was 'the development of new sources of funding and new outlets for video.' Television took centre stage on both counts and seemed to dictate the geographic location of the Festival's various programmes, with low-budget and usually more innovative work relegated to Camden Town where, at the Film Co-op, London Video Arts presented new and not so new additions to its distribution catalogue. Videos made for television were shown at the ICA, whilst feature-length fictional work got the limelight at the National Film Theatre. An odd, but unsurprising pecking order — a bit of mixing, or rather more creative programming might have made the whole event more enjoyable and mutually informative.

The 'Video for Television' showcase managed to provide some of the most interesting and a lot of the most irritating viewing, the latter exemplifying the worst traits of television's dalliance with video art, reflecting a preoccupation with empty style and technological wizardry at the expense of any 'meaningful' content. Zbigniew Rybczynski's *Steps*, a British American co-production, was a case in point. Chromakey techniques were used to superimpose a motley bunch of snap-happy, loud-mouthed American tourists onto (and into) the celebrated Odessa Steps sequence of Eisenstein's 1925 film *Battleship Potemkin*. Well executed and too clever by half, with lots of filmic in-jokes, it was also inordinately crass. Hamburgers, Coke-cans and other colourful icons of '80s Americana were made to interact with black and white images of Cossack boots and bayonets, and scenes of massacre were trivialised, culminating in a ghetto-blaster being dropped into the baby's pram as it careens down the steps. Thus politically and emotively charged images were undermined and made risible — to what ends? A two-fingered salute to Art — this is after all the most famous montage sequence in the history of film — or a nose-thumbing denial of the events of 1905 and by implication the Russian Revolution? Either way the result was gross: high-tech camp.

Time Code (which wasn't shown in its entirety) was another example of collaboration, this time between various North American and European TV stations and independent video-makers. Seven countries participated, each producing a short self-contained segment on the theme of 'place', the whole forming an hour-long programme for transmission in each country. To circumvent language barriers, dialogue and commentary were done away with, although, in the event, sheer mediocrity of ideas and heavy use of digital effects managed to transcend all boundaries, national and otherwise, in a vacuous stream of post-production gloss. The segments veered from the mildly entertaining, in *Heart Beat* from Marty St James and Anne Wilson, a pantomime frolic through English history and the environs of Hackney, to the more sinister in *Lucksmith* from Gusztáv Hámos, where an undulating walk through a fantastical suburban landscape intercuts with images of a female torso and smelting iron. In all this was like watching an overlong ad, but without the satisfaction of knowing quite what it is that you're being sold.

By contrast *Invisible Television*, a compilation from 'scratch' pioneers Gorilla Tapes, managed to be highly entertaining whilst subverting the conventions of television. A hilarious mixture of TV films and news footage of politicians were reworked in a series of vignettes which mocked and undermined such staple genres as the Quiz Game, the Cop Show, the Western and the Hospital Drama. As a technique 'scratch' is no longer new (having been snapped up by most ad and promo makers) but its insights into the way televisual images can be manipulated remains fresh, proving how Orwellian doublespeak prevails and now absolute truth and absolute lies can become one and the same at the touch of an edit button. However, good though the tape is, one can't help wondering how it will fare when broadcast and whether it will be subsumed into the same seamless flow of images which it seeks to disrupt. Also, since it's been commissioned for networked transmission by Channel Four, one is left wondering just who is subverting who. Is the ruffian now acceptable as a licenced court jester, a necessary irritant?

The undoubted hit of the Festival was *Out of Order*, a Birmingham Film and Video Workshop production, directed by Jonnie Turpie and written by Dead Honest Soul Searchers (ruffians every one of them). It was funded by the BFI and Channel Four. A feature-length comedy, though rooted in the politically motivated tradition of 'community video', its rap-happy plot brings together some of the best of video's potential with more than a passing nod at popular television. With its appeal to a young audience, it could well be another first for independent video if it can get into the high-street video shops. Meanwhile, it remains unseen and unwritten about until it is officially launched by the BFI later in 1988. First, however, they have to decide whether their progidy is a 'film' or 'video'. At the Festival those hedging their bets called it a 'movie'. □

Invisible Television *shows on C4 on Monday 21 December at 11pm, and* Time Code *on Monday 4 January at 11pm.* Steps *opens a new series of* Ghosts in the Machine *on C4 on 22 January.*

TELEVISION

Cold comfort docks

Hugo Williams

WE WERE ALL very concerned by the news item from Marks & Spencer last week (all channels, all day) about their cuddly toys coming unstitched at the seams and disgorging cotton wool upon the world. I'm not suggesting that M&S did it deliberately, but the effect was to get their name as a manufacturer of cuddly toys repeatedly onto the news three weeks before Christmas.

As a warm-up to Mrs T's 'talks' with Mr G (debatable how many they can have in 1½ hours) on his way to Washington, we saw a recreation of the earlier tea-party, ironically called **Breakthrough at Reykjavik** (ITV), a script by Ronald Harwood based on notes by Russian and US delegates and played for Granada by lookalikes. The effect was weird. It was as if Reagan's Spitting Image had been gotten out of bed to be hauled over the coals by a British house-master. If Harwood's script was half-way accurate it hardly needed Sarah Harding's heavily *Spitting Image*-prone direction to make the point that Reagan was sleep-walking.

The secret was in the sadistic casting of top-dog specialist Timothy West as Gorbo, his birthmark almost insultingly accurate, while confining Reagan to a mere lookalike, Robert Beatty, who appropriately once played a Canadian Mountie at Scotland Yard in ITV's *Dial 999* in the '50s. Perhaps the mismatch was life-like. Gorbo's urbane asides, freed from the leaden delay of translation, seemed positively charming alongside Reagan's flailing ignorance. Details like the bug-proof 'bubble' the Americans climbed into between bouts — 'If we filled this thing with water we could keep goldfish, he he' (Reagan) — and the unavailability of a secure photostat machine — 'I think we can help. Some carbon paper. The triumph of Soviet technology!' (a Soviet aide) — revealed the essential flakiness of the occasion. With the protective loose covers of separate languages removed, along with the pauses for diplomatic translation, the whole thing was revealed as the burlesque it no doubt was. I wonder, will the pair go legit for Washington?

I couldn't help feeling sorry for beaky blond Anthony Mayhew, 26-year-old City trader (£100,000 pa) cast as the yuppie black-hat opposite thoroughly decent East End ironmonger Terry Johns (£8,000 pa) in Stephen Lambert's devilish piece of anti-LDDC propaganda *East End Story* on **Forty Minutes** (BBC2). Did Mayhew knowingly allow himself to be posed with his Saab Turbo, chablis in hand, against a backdrop of Scandinavian-style condominiums? 'I live just over there,' he said, indicating his two-bedroom bachelor apartment on Crocodile Wharf. 'It's really convenient to nip over here to the Club after work for wind-surfing or squash — and that's exactly what I do.' He smiled unwittingly.

While horrid baddie Mayhew stuffed himself with designer food in some god-awful dockside eaterie, attractive, modest, likeable Terry Johns waited for his new baby to be born and reflected ruefully on the impossibility of getting a bigger flat. As he likeably pointed out, it's not the

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yuppies' fault the Isle of Dogs natives are getting squeezed out of house and home, but that of the un-elected, expedient-oriented LDDC who are responsible for letting market forces bulldoze the community.

'On the one hand we've got the LDDC who only care about the rich and on the other hand you've got the Council who are only concerned with re-housing Bangladeshis . . .' What neither of these two pawns seemed to realise was that the money for all this mayhem is coming from America. Aren't we lucky people?

The two protagonists of the film meet unknowingly for the first and last time sitting opposite one another in the new Docklands Light Railway, gazing out at their inauspicious future. I took a trip on this railway myself to see the biggest new development in Europe since WW2. It is indeed a sad story.

The different styles mushrooming enthusiastically out of pastoral decay include everything from Alpine kitsch hacienda-style leisure complexes to compromised high-tech glassware and embarrassed vernacular. You've never seen such an uncoordinated scramble: money out on a field day and not even a yuppie in command of its forces.

From a siding of Fenchurch Street re-titled 'Docklands Gateway', you zoom over the top of all this, past misnamed un-places like 'Westferry' and 'Heron Wharf' to 'Island Gardens' near the *Cutty Sark*. Then you walk under the Thames into a different world where the elegant Georgian village of Greenwich grew up round Hawksmoor's magnificent Naval College (officers only) and Observatory (now redundant). Last weekend there was a dinner-dance for 600 officers (+1) in the Thornhill-decorated 'Painted Hall' with Queen Anne looking down from the ceiling and Georges I, II and the father of III looking on from the far end.

An immaculate rehearsal of 'O Come Let Us Adore Him' was going on in the neighbouring chapel. It was two o'clock. To the delight of the landlords, we were one minute late for a Guinness in two nearby pubs.

There are no ticket offices in the Docklands Light Railway, only user-angry ticket dispensers and French-style ticket-validators: *'Do not cross the red line without a valid ticket.'* Once on board, a breezy ticket collector in a special light-blue, US-style monkey-suit cruises the gangway. One girl tourist didn't have a ticket. No, I'm afraid she couldn't buy one from him direct. All he could do would be to sell her a season ticket for £10. Otherwise she'd have to get off at the next stop. With a wintry smile the girl said goodbye to us and prepared to face the unmapped wastes of something called 'Coldharbour'. As the doors opened a chill wind blew in from those brave new acres.

In a short called *The Chairman* on **What On Earth Is Going On?** (C4) Michael Palin clearly illustrated the mobile nightmare foreseen by the pressure group of which he is chairman, *Transport 2000.*

COMMENT

SONGWRITER LEO ROBIN got it wrong: diamonds are not a girl's best friend. It's irrelevant whether she finds them attractive; as an investment they're flawed. By subjecting carbon to ultra-high temperatures and pressures, 'industrial' diamonds have long been produced to order, but now I'm informed there's a very real fear that someone is going to *make* — not fake — diamonds as actual gems. And no amount of testing could establish that stones such as these were not the real thing, for the very good reason that real is what, effectively, they would be.

This would not only shatter a girl's private savings, but would send great waves through South African politics. De Beers, which recently bought up the whole of Botswana's diamond stock, would find itself with nothing but glass-dust trickling through its fat, white fingers. Of course it would still be beautiful stuff, would still play breathcatching games with the light — and, of course, it would still be the hardest known substance and therefore industrially useful — but the diamond would instantly have lost its 'value' in the market.

Which brings me to Degas' *Les Blanchisseuses:* a study of two tired laundry women painted midway through the 1870s by the then -reviled Impressionist. Last week, this canvas was sold to a private collector for £7.48 million — a figure which does tend to slide off the brain but which (to attempt to pinion it) would have paid for 60,000 people to be treated at the Bristol Royal Infirmary this year. In short, *Les Blanchisseuses* has just acquired some value in the market.

Nor is it unique among 19th- and 20th-century artworks. In March this year the press went wild when a painting of sunflowers by van Gogh was sold for £24,750,000. but a month ago his *Irises* topped that at £30,300,000 — while every day there are city-page reports of record prices for Dadaist collages, Pointillist drawings, this by Renoir, that by Monet, the other by Stanley Spencer. For the last two months the *Independent* has even run a daily Art Market column. It's author, Geraldine Norman, was previously sales correspondent at *The Times*, but this new job gives both her and her subject a much more prominent profile.

Does any of it matter? Oh certainly there's irony in van Gogh's having died poor and mad when, slightly less than a century later, he could have lived in high luxury — a Porsche a year had he felt so inclined — from the sale of just one of his paintings. And certainly it would be bitter for Degas, who was forced to watch as Impressionism was ridiculed by the art establishment, to know what *serious* money his and his colleagues' work is now worth. But, since van Gogh and Degas are dead, shouldn't we merely sit back in our seats and enjoy the art-market circus? There will always be the clowning of fakers such as Tom Keating to keep us amused, not to mention the tumbles from the high wire as artists, schools and periods crash. After all, if we permit a certain number of our fellows to accumulate the odd seven million pounds, why should we care when they spend it on painting or sculpture instead of a racehorse?

The most obvious reason is that, when a work of art is privately owned, it is usually kept hidden from the public. This is true of absolutely everything, of course, from the scribbles that your child brings you home from school to the Hockney that you bought for a tenner (someone did) in 1954. But I'd argue that a first-time purchase is different. *Les Blanchisseuses*, for instance, was sold last week by descendants of its original owner, the art dealer Durand-Ruel, who was nearly ruined by his support of the Impressionists. It's the moment when an artwork changes hands at a profit that questions arise.

From artists' point of view, there's the lively issue of their right to a share of each successive mark-up, even when they have sold their original ownership. So far, this right has never been recognised anywhere that I know of, but it does sit in wait on the statute books in California.

For the public, there are more complex problems when art acquires re-sale value. To what extent do commercial and artistic criteria become confused? Can big buyers, such as the Saatchis, affect what our galleries acquire and show? Does the price of a picture disturb our response to it — make us belittle it, respect it or, when that price reaches millions, detach from it? And, to return to my first unease, doesn't the market remove from our sight many works of broad cultural significance? (Reproduction, even good reproduction, isn't an adequate alternative. When I first saw a van Gogh original for instance, I felt a great kick of astonishment at how little the reproductions had conveyed of the three-dimensional vividness.)

I doubt that this jumble of worries and questions has one answer. But there are a couple of *partial* solutions to the messing that market-value does with art. The first, the most straightforward, is to insist that artworks that have acquired a particular price-ticket be publicly displayed, however they are owned, for a certain portion of each year. If nothing else, this would give us access to works that have risen to the top of the dealers' value-system.

The second partial solution is to re-think the ways that we subsidise art. We need to place far more emphasis on *buying*, and *showing*, the works of new artists. There are thousands of walls on which they could hang and halls in which they could stand — in hospitals, schools, factories, offices — and neither insurance nor security would be the problems they are with the *Mona Lisa*. That way we would have a right of access in the same way as Durand-Ruel had right of access to *Les Blanchisseuses*, having bought it at a time when Degas could do with all the encouragement going.

Moreover, we would become less dependent on the tastes of dealers, art critics, gallery directors. With paintings and sculptures all over the place, we would be freer to love and hate, compare and consider, look and learn, than we can possibly hope to be when art is either concealed from us or glorified by its price — sometimes pricelessness — into a different kind of icon. Isn't it saner to love a diamond for the rainbows it can create than because it probably cost a miner his life to extract it from the earth?

Harriett Gilbert

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Books

SEX . . .

Ways of seeing pornography

Marek Kohn

Aids has never been a simple matter of health: it carries in its slipstream questions of morality, censorship, representation and power. With his new book, Simon Watney has raised the volume of the debate

Sex and the thinking man: a Terrence Higgins Trust poster

ONE OF THE LESS remarked but more remarkable phenomena surrounding the Aids epidemic in this country it the Terrence Higgins Trust. With striking adroitness, it turned to its advantage the reluctance of the state to address the crisis: the product of a marginalised social movement, it occupied the vacuum and built an alliance that has permitted it to channel some of the power of the medical profession into the service of its own goals.

An important aspect of this strategy has been the willingness of many individuals around the Trust to control their justifiable anger and build a dialogue — with Conservative politicians, with parts of the media. Resistance to attacks is combined with recognition that these power blocs are not homogeneous. But not everybody embraces this approach: certainly not Simon Watney. His rhetorical tactics in **Policing Desire: Pornography, Aids & the Media** (Comedia/Methuen, £18.95 & £6.95) would, if translated into studio skills, provide an effective basis for producing heavy metal records. The formula involves sustaining a clamour, pushing all the controls to the max and not worrying about being wildly off-key.

The author introduces the book by describing it as an analysis of representations: 'I have attempted to analyse the overall discursive structures of Aids commentary, paying special attention to its repetitions, its slippages, its omissions, its emphases, its "no-go" areas, its narrative problems, and so on.' He himself emphasises the text's place in an affirmative, angry and uncompromising gay discourse. He quotes gay activist John Wahl: 'You have to absolutely never accept second-class humanity or second-class citizenship for any reason whatsoever, not even for tactical reasons.' Herein lies the book's strength. It is a sustained tirade which insists on the inclusion of gay men in the body politic and representations of the Aids epidemic.

With the quotation of Iris Murdoch on the 'careful responsible skilful use of words', he declares his pretentions to a discourse that is analytically as well as morally superior to that of his targets. Frequently, however, the inferences he draws seem to come from somewhere other than the text he cites. For example, he quotes a reader's letter criticising 'pornography' in the *New York Native* which ends: 'Let's have a creative pornography constructed along lines other than power and the exchange of bodily fluids.' Watney comments: 'This is the authentic voice of the feminist-identified gay man, spouting forth . . . in terms which . . . perversely equate the possibility of HIV infection with quantitive rather than qualitative aspects of sex.' This seems harsh, since the man is clearly calling for just the sort of qualitatively-modified Safer Sex pornography that Watney propounds as vital to countering the epidemic.

Possibly the key to his reaction is to be found in the word 'feminist'. Watney's position on pornography can be simply indicated by the words of the gay man he quotes approvingly as writing: 'To hate porn is to hate sex. To hate sex is to hate being human.' A few pages before, he has criticised Rosalind Coward for her 'maddeningly prim and self-righteous tone', and for making 'sweeping statements'.

From an anti-censorship position, Watney argues that the 'notion of pornography is *necessary* to the thought-structures of both mainstream feminism *and* religious or secular fundamentalism'. Despite allusions to patriarchy, the issue of inequality of power between men and women is ignored in favour of an assault on the American moralist right and the recruitment of Freud to dismiss the question of violence. He suggests that the latter is the result of an 'unconscious defensive mechanism' that projects the 'violence of the response' to pornography 'back onto the pornographic image itself'. A little less psychoanalysis and a bit more politics would have been useful in this section. When he blithely writes of 'psychic processes which are omnipresent . . . lending pleasure to doing the ironing for one person, motivating the career as a photographer for another', you begin to wonder whether he thinks there is anything else to domestic labour, or sexual politics.

Watney appears to take the careful responsible skilful use of words to mean a free license for hyperbole. 'The British media cares (sic) as much about our health as *Der Sturm* (sic) cared about that of the Jews in the 1930s,' he proclaims. This rings loud, but scarcely addresses the complexity of representations of Aids, or the heterogeneity of the media. On the contrary, Watney seems concerned to demonstrate a uniform degree of

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moral turpitude. He has evidently conceived an animus against the *Observer*'s Robin McKie, who is wheeled on at intervals throughout the book. Quite why he should be singled out is unclear, except to demonstrate that the *Observer* is 'content to peddle the same kind of trash on the subject of Aids as any of its "gutter press" rivals'.

He has a penchant for absolutes: 'There is *no such thing* as "the Aids virus", or an "Aids carrier", or "the Aids test"'. Public understanding would certainly be enhanced if it were more widely appreciated that the 'Aids test' is actually a test for antibodies to HIV and that it is the virus which is carried rather than the syndrome. However, when Watney claims: 'That these three points are not basic common knowledge, is the measure of the *total* and *absolute* irresponsibility of the British media, in all its hydra forms and variants', he has abandoned debate for self-indulgent hot air. He makes his voice a lone one, and he seems to like it that way. □

. . . AND POETRY

In from the cold

Paul Hallam

Articulate Flesh: Male Homo-Eroticism and Modern Poetry
GREGORY WOODS *Yale* £16.95

WHEN, AT 15, I asked for Genet in Mansfield Library, I was taken to the back room. Genet's books were locked away with the damaged books and the rare. I was the first to take them out. I'd finally asked: I'd begun an embarrassed if thrilled search for images of men, affirmations of homosexuality.

Proust might help, so might porn, and amongst the bibliographical items listed in *Articulate Flesh* as 'of use in the writing of this book' are films, plays, memoirs and magazines all containing 'homo-erotic material'. Genet's fiction is as much quoted in the first half of the book, 'Themes', as any of the individual poets considered in the second, 'Variations'. Many of the arguments to be found here could be applied to *any* erotic representations of the male.

Woods begins with the likes of Narcissus, Apollo, Sebastian, Heracles and Ganymede, a range of types, ages, musculatures. Narcissus, in love with a boy (if only himself), Ganymede as art's first great gay pick-up, an early example of upward mobility through sex. Woods also considers the depiction of Christ's clothes through the ages: full robe on the Cross, later trimmed to skimpy loincloth. The wide-ranging survey takes in armies of lovers, sportsmen, cowboys and sailors. He traverses the landscapes of male bodies, considers developed muscles as a kind of drag and explores cross-class gay fantasies and desires.

The book's central argument lies in the chapter on 'Childless Fathers'. In it Woods parallels artistic creation and procreation. He looks at male pregnancy myths and poetic reflections on childlessness. Though abortion/defecation jokes are a staple of hard-edged pub drag patter, poetic reference is rare. Woods' explorations are interesting, his conclusion banal: 'the poem is a baby' is a figurative commonplace, as Woods himself admits. The pain, rewards and consequences of childbirth and writing are so obviously different. So when Woods writes: 'reproduction itself may be no more than a travesty of, or metaphor for, something more refined. The ejaculation of poetry and the writing of semen *signify* in a context beyond generation', I'm suspicious of 'refined' as well as confused by his argument. It looks like collusion in a gay male artist superiority theory.

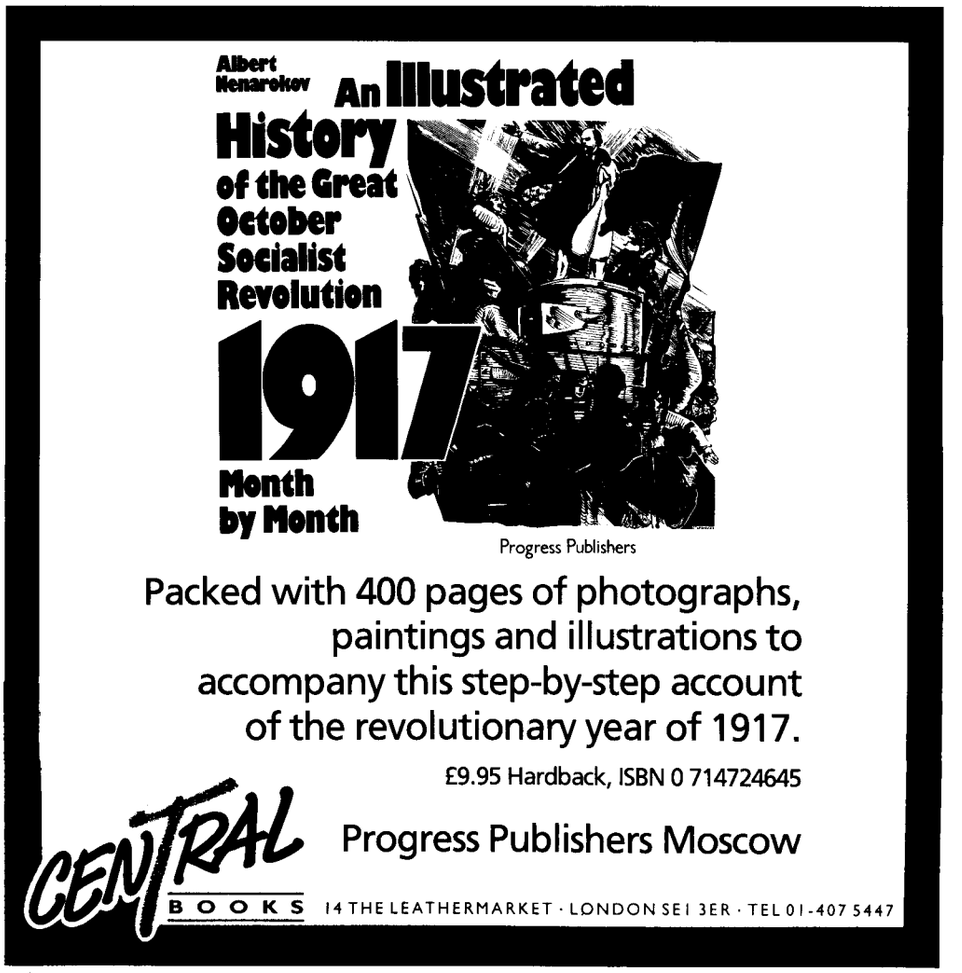
He's less waffly on individual poets. If D.H. Lawrence's working heroes are little more than 'embodied erections', his soldiers are even more objectionable: 'Like a bride he took my bayonet, wanting it.' Lawrence grudgingly concedes that 'even sodomy can be sane and wholesome/granted there is an exchange of genuine feeling' and in 'Spiral Flame' he pictures 'my young men/spinning and dancing, like flamey fire-spouts in the dark ahead of the multitude!' Sadder and less fascistic was his lifelong search 'for a few men to be at peace with' ('Compari'). There is a rare direct expression of desire in an early version of 'Cypresses', a longing to 'exchange the lost kiss/And come to dark connection' with Etruscan men, naked but for their boots. Woods finds just enough poems to warrant Lawrence's inclusion, but there is little that is truly homo-erotic.

Ginsberg's howling, his boasting celebrations of buggery, prove less interesting than a footnote revealing that he slept with Neal Cassady who slept with Gavin Arthur who slept with Edward Carpenter who slept with Walt Whitman, 'a kind of gay Apostolic succession' of which Ginsberg was proud.

Ginsberg rejects subterfuge and disguise, opposes a constipated state with images of diffuse sexuality and tenderness. But the explicitness inevitably denies it much beyond an immediate and refreshing graffiti-like appeal.

Woods is dissatisfied with the use of the impersonal pronoun in the work of Hart Crane and Auden. Crane's 'modern love', 'charred at a stake in younger times', infuses the poetry, often a tortured 'record of rage and partial appetites', drunken, nocturnal adventures on waterfronts and in urinals. There are more ecstatic voyages too, the 'wrapt inflections of our love', 'the pieties of lovers' hands'. Woods skilfully draws attention to the underlying homo-eroticism . If Crane was 'baroque with the stratagems of the oppressed' and 'hid relatively straightforward emotions under an ornate carapace of difficulty' you can regret the oppression whilst respecting the strategies of the oppressed. You can certainly admire the control and baroque brilliance of the verse.

Auden can be tender and direct in 'Dear, though the night is gone' and I, for one, am happy to guess the pronoun: ▷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An Illustrated History of the Great October Socialist Revolution
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We kissed and I was glad
At everything you did,
Indifferent to those
Who sat with hostile eyes . . .

More often his poetic world is full of spies, betrayals, double-cross, suspicion, subterfuges, bribery and hypocrisy. That may relate directly to the homosexual double life and an attack on a society which imposes it; the images certainly contribute to a complex and witty poetry. Woods again seems best at explicating the poets he frowns on for their lack of openness.

The author's real enthusiasm is reserved for Thom Gunn's wrestling with questions of order, control and will — the struggle of form and content in his work seen almost as an S/M relationship in itself. In recent volumes Gunn seems to favour a wider range of sex, more tenderness, adopting a variety of poetic modes to accommodate an increasing fascination with metamorphosis and a polymorphous sexuality. An attempt to shed even skin when skin seems like another constricting uniform:

. . . the sheen
fell from him, he
became wholly sensitive
as if his wholy body had
rolled back its own foreskin.
('An Amorous Debate')

Gunn, openly homosexual, is undoubtedly a fine poet, which only proves there are good poets out of the closet as well as in it.

Articulate Flesh, teasing with short quotes, certainly sent me back to the poets. It's a hotchpotch of images from a range of sources, well-written, funny at times, often steamy. Something like a gay scrapbook a bit overdressed as an academic study, it's full of incidental and sometimes provoking observations. The varied gay love messages it contains, whether coded or direct, might serve anyone seeking to understand the range of gay experience. I hope it finds a place on an open shelf in Mansfield Library. □

PERSECUTION

To tell the truth

Clive Ponting

On the Run
PHILIP AGEE *Bloomsbury* £14.95

ANYONE WHO is under the illusion that there's much difference in the way that the Western democracies and the Soviet Union treat dissenters should read this book. It is a shocking story of the persecution by the USA and its allies of an individual who told the truth. He was made into a stateless person by the cancelling of his passport and branded as a KGB or Cuban agent in exactly the same way that the Soviets describe their dissidents as CIA agents and refuse them passports.

Agee was, for over ten years, a hardworking and loyal member of the CIA stationed mainly in Latin America. He left the agency partly for personal reasons (the book contains much about his tangled personal life) and then, gradually, re-educated himself as to the real nature of the CIA's operations. He came to realise that the public promises about protecting democracy were a sham and that the USA was really involved in propping up tinpot dictators and oligarchical regimes and training their secret police to torture the opposition. All of this was done in the age-old American tradition of protecting their backyard with known pro-American dictators. As FDR said of one of them, 'He may be a son-of-a-bitch but at least he's our son-of-a-bitch.'

Agee then started to write a book on the real policy of the CIA based on his own experience. Immediately the CIA started to put on the pressure. His estranged wife was persuaded to deny him access to his children. Glamorous agents planted bugged typewriters on him and tried to lure him to Spain, where the CIA plotted with Franco's secret police to imprison him on trumped up charges. After the book came out to worldwide interest, the pressure really started to mount. In succession Agee was thrown out of Britain, France, West Germany, Holland and Italy. The way in which each country acted says much about their style of government.

In Britain Agee was deported on the word of the Home Scretary, Merlyn Rees, that he was a security risk. He was allowed to appeal to an 'independent' tribunal of three appointed by Rees. He had to construct his defence without being shown any of the evidence against him. Not surprisingly, he lost. The Dutch were more open. This time he was charged by the Minister and appealed to a similar 'independent' tribunal and was shown the flimsy evidence agaist him (mainly newspaper cuttings). Then he was expelled. The French simply kidnapped him and threw him over the border. The Germans didn't even let him in. The Italians let him in twice, then realised who he was and refused him entry.

Eventually, after he'd crossed their border secretly twice, the Germans were forced to let him settle on his second wife's work permit. Then the United States decided to get rough. Agee had started a Freedom of Information case against the CIA to reveal what the agency had done against him since he started the book. This disclosed that the reason Agee had not been prosecuted was that the CIA would have had to reveal in court their illegal conspiracy and crimes against him. (If he had been British he would not have got any of this information.) In retaliation for this claim the government revoked his passport. Agee went to the Supreme Court to get it back and lost. If he was British he would have found that he had no legal right to a passport.

Agee tells his story in a highly personalised and informal style that at times reads like a spy novel. But, behind this exterior, there is a serious and worrying message. Agee was put under enormous personal pressure and on more than one occasion nearly cracked under the weight of the CIA directed persecution (being followed by teams of agents around Europe and smeared by their helpers in the media). The book also illustrates the close relationship between the CIA and their fellow intelligence agencies in every country of Western Europe and their ability to get governments to do what they want. Yet all of this enormous effort, stretching over many years, was directed not against the KGB but against an individual who had dared to reject total loyalty to the CIA whatever it did and to believe that the public should be told what it was doing in the name of democracy. That he achieved so much is a tribute to his determination. That he had to fight so hard to survive is a demonstration of the power of the state and its secret agencies in the West. □

FICTION

All in the family

Liz Heron

Valentino & Sagittarius
NATALIA GINZBURG trans. AVRIL BARDONI
Carcanet £10.95

IN NATALIA GINZBURG's writing there's a certain claustrophobia that's an intrinsic part of its strength. Here, as always, she writes about the family, neither quizzing its place in the social scheme of things nor drawing it as a template for domestic normality. She just closes in on the messy connectedness between people who live together or are tied by blood, marriage, sex or emotional need. And she seems to insist that, whatever is happening outside the door, it's what goes on in the four walls of these intimacies that's at the heart of everything.

These two novellas, written six years apart in the 1950s, are not only swathed in the same family atmosphere but carry the same fatal motifs of vanity and ambition. In each there's a bossy matriarch and a gloomy, inauspicious wedding, which in itself confirms the flawed nature of family delusions. Far from being a haven, a place of certainties, the family and its consolations are insecure, impermanent. Yet Ginzburg suggests that there's no freedom from all this, unless it's in the utter selfishness of a Valentino.

Handsome, lazy and narcissistic, Valentino remains oblivious to the sacrifices made for him so that the hazy promise of a medical career might be fulfilled. Parental hopes are dashed when he announces marriage to a woman ten years older. She's ugly and overbearing, but rich. His parents accuse him of marrying for money, overlooking his chronic incapacity to love at all.

Both novellas have a self-effacing female narrator. In the first she's Valentino's sister, Caterina, a schoolgirl when the story begins and a teacher by its end, though loath to learn the lessons of self-preservation. Through her eyes Ginzburg uncovers a nest of desperate vulnerabilities, expectations badly judged, resentments that take root. For all her peremptory acts of generosity, Maddalena, the new wife, is never accepted. Caterina suffers when a proposal is withdrawn, though she never loved her short-lived fiancé. For mother and children, husband and wife, brother and sister, attachment, less fragile than love, seems more real.

All of Ginzburg's characters have something to redeem them; even Valentino is less to blame than others for their expectations of him. Self-deception blurs vision everywhere. If its penalties seem well deserved by the pretentious mother in *Sagittarius*, the narrating voice reserves some

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sympathy behind its critical detachment. It is, after all, the voice of a daughter, one who has escaped the family home and her mother's selfish management of all those in it. The worst casualties are the other daughter, frail Giulia, who has missed out on a moneyed marriage, and Chaim, the refugee doctor she had to settle for as a husband.

There's the same hurried inevitability to events. In pursuit of her ill-considered plan to open a gallery, the narrator's mother gets conned by the tackily arty Scilla, whose transparent phoniness is only partly obscured by the cosy domestic familiarities of their friendship. The sheer ordinariness of Ginzburg's characters and situations makes them all the more painful; the ill-invested emotions, the neglect and unfairness in family relationships is nowhere better expressed than in her delicate passing vignettes.

Valentino takes dramas in its rapid stride; the long chronicle of marriages, deaths and births in its 53 pages unfolds smoothly, evanescent like a fable, a tragic fable of families rather than the tale of one in particular. Its narrator, thoroughly embroiled in the family fates, concludes in a doomed present tense that seals off her life. *Sagittarius* ends, less suffocatingly, in the past, at a backward-looking distance from its narrator, a more off-stage character altogether, independent, paying for her studies with teaching, sharing a flat with a good and close friend.

But the friend gets married and is missed; and the narrator sometimes wonders if she'll find someone too. The family is no *bildungsroman*; it just goes on and on. □

His last

Dennis O'Driscoll

I will take this pair
of partly-worn shoes
and wear them
to the end of the journey
they were intended to complete

I will aim them
where they were meant to go
I will follow in his footsteps
before his tracks are covered over
and his route cut off

MEMOIRS

Three into one

Michèle Roberts

Family Memories
REBECCA WEST *Virago* £14.95

IT'S EASY TO BE suspicious of the posthumous publication of the unfinished works of famous novelists, to assume that money-hungry publishers are unwilling to let go of a source of income and will sooner or later get round to the laundry lists. However true that may have originally been in this case, the publication of *Family Memories* is vindicated by Faith Evans' skilful, tactful and unobtrusive editing, welding a mass of manuscript into a coherent and readable narrative to complete the work that death prevented Rebecca West from finishing herself. As Faith Evans points out in her illuminating introduction, Rebecca West wrote this book on and off for the last two decades of her life and clearly, from the evidence of her scrupulous and copious redrafting, wanted it to see the light of day.

It's less an autobiography, or even a memoir, than some sort of novel. It plays with the forms that memory and fantasy can construct for the purposes less of putting the record straight than of vindicating its author's attitude to the world and those around her. Never shy of the authoritative narrative or the didactic point of view, Rebecca West here re-orders the past in order to create a work with its roots in both the myth of origins and the fairy tale: the events leading up to the birth of the heroine (herself) are crucially important to her later sense of tragedy and betrayal. That's how she puts it, anyway; her need for consolation, for a comforting pattern, wars interestingly with her recognition of the facts of history. Much of the time she elides them, producing a moving and vigorously written fiction.

She tells the story of three families: her maternal line, the Mackenzies, descended from Highland pipers and textile manufacturers; her paternal line, the Fairfields, a dispossessed Anglo-Irish family with aristocratic connections; and the Maxwell Andrews, her husband's family, an engaging mixture of Lithuanian, Lancastrian and Scottish. By far the most interesting is the story of her mother's family, which indeed takes up most of the book and perhaps exemplifies Virginia Woolf's dictum that women writers crucially need to 'think back through our mothers' in order to make sense of our inheritance of a patriarchal tradition.

After a sticky start, a rather stodgy chapter outlining bits of the genealogical tree and another giving a portrait of West's beloved Uncle Alick, the story really takes flight, winging between student musician life in Germany, bohemian/bourgeois manners and morals in mid-Victorian Edinburgh, settler low and high life in Australia in the 1880s. A family saga unfolds: the beautiful stern Janet struggling to bring up her six talented children in the New Town, with the aid of her sister Isa, a sense of humour and a fund of devotion to the males of the family; Janet's betrayal by her fine son, Alick, who is spirited away by the even more beautiful sempstress-temptress Mary Ironside; fresh tragedy involving poverty, the loss of children, burgher outrage at one child's involvement in a homosexual scandal; the family fortunes to some extent restored out in the bold new world of St Kitts: the young Rebecca observing, as a coda, the unhappiness between her parents as her father seduces his way around Streatham.

Memorable, vivid and beautifully written are the episodes where feeling fuels the action rather than being laid on top of it: Joey's introduction to the sinister Hogarthian chop-house of infamous repute; the younger Isabella's arrival in Australia to find her lost brother Johnny prancing on the docks in his kilt in the compay of the Whistler from Glasgow and the yellow-haired Lizzie who

J.G. BALLARD
THE DAY OF CREATION
"Classic Ballard.
Mesmerising.
No one else writes with
such haunting impact."
William Boyd
"A writer I always read
with pleasure and interest."
Graham Greene
Gollancz

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runs the local brothel. I could have read these tales for ever, so rich, quirky and full of original life are they. But, since West takes seriously her own questions (Where did I really come from? Why am I as I am?), these marvellous moments are surrounded by a fair amount of savage musing on life's brutality and meaninglessness. □

MEDIA

Siamese twins

Mark Fisher

The Media in British Politics
ed. JEAN SEATON & BEN PIMLOTT *Avebury* £27.50

IT IS A TIME of change and ferment in our media. Mrs Thatcher proposes to introduce two major bills in the next two years which will alter the whole of our broadcasting system. Multi-media companies buy up newspapers, publishers and TV companies in a game of Media Unhappy Families, going for a complete set. Meanwhile, the government's raid on the BBC Glasgow offices to confiscate the Zircon tapes gave a chilling glimpse of totalitarian ruthlessness.

In such an uncertain and unsafe climate there has never been a greater need for strong and well-informed voices on the left to examine the relationship between politics and the media. Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott have brought together an impressive collection of essays by writers such as Peter Hennessy, Peter Kellner, Brian Whitaker and Colin Seymour-Ure who have knowledge of both worlds. The book examines the use and abuse of politicians by the media, and of the media by politicians. Peter Hennessy and David Walker contribute an excellent description and critique of the Parliamentary lobby system through which 'public men have three ways of communicating with writers in the Press. First, showing them social civilities; second, furnishing them with facts and arguments which need not be kept secret, and which may be useful in determining public opinion; and third, imparting to them official secrets which ought not to be divulged'. The observation is Lord Granville's, a 19th-century Whig politician. Little has changed.

Unlike the relationship between the media and political leaders, which is now, as Colin Seymour-Ure argues, 'utterly entwined', like bindweed. Do political leaders create themselves through the media, or are they created by the media? Do modern media make leadership more or less difficult? Are the media part of the answer or part of the question?

Good though the above-mentioned chapters are, the outstanding essay is Jean Seaton's on the reporting of atrocities. Here she teases out the subjective judgments and nice motivations within the BBC as the Jewish holocaust went largely unreported. Wartime throws a sharp light onto problems that are perennial. What should be reported? In what tone and language? With what degree of moral judgment? It is sobering to learn that Hugh Greene, a subsequent Director-General, believed that moral condemnation of the Germans was undesirable in that it was likely merely to lose German Service listeners and that the 'criteria should be success or failure rather than right or wrong'. Jean Seaton's conclusion that 'it was a secret known by some, understood at least by some, but over which there was no political will to act' may not be confined to the reporting of the holocaust.

This book is not without its weaknesses. David Murphy's chapter on the local press adds little to what he has already said on this important and overlooked area in his *The Silent Watchdog: The Press in Local Politics* (1976). The editors' decision not to consider the problems posed by the new technology because they 'are happening too fast to permit any verdict that will not be rapidly overtaken by events' is a cop-out. And it is disappointing that there is no international perspective; little on news sourcing; nothing on the influence of media economics or of advertising. Against these omissions must be weighed the very considerable achievements of the book in giving a variety of insights into the Siamese inter-relationship of politics and media. Ultimately both are part of the established order of our society and both prey on, rely on, each other. Such a mutual dependence can scarcely be in the interests of our democracy and does little to ensure a wide and open political agenda.

This is a book, in short, that ought to be widely read — which is most unlikely at £27.50 for 266 pages. Such pricing knowingly and cynically ignores the public, seeking instead to squeeze revenue out of a captive academic and institutional market. However, with the Arts Minister threatening to privatise library services, it gives a timely incentive to go down to your local public library and take out a copy. □

Mark Fisher is the Shadow Spokesperson on the Arts and Media.

The honourable project, pioneered so successfully by Writers and Readers, of persuading the British that a cartoon format can be used to explore serious subjects just about survives in the latest offering from Camden Press, ANIMAL LIBERATION — A GRAPHIC GUIDE (£4.95). But David Hines' drawings don't do much more than illustrate a text by Peter Singer and Lori Gruen, and we've seen the text before. For a professional teacher of philosophy, Peter Singer is still managing to get by on remarkably little of the stuff: this book contains the same hardline Benthamite utilitarianism, unselfconsciously forced into the language of rights and liberation, that he has been promoting for the last 14 years. This time Hinduism, Buddhism, Plutarch, Isaiah and Francis of Assissi also get walk on parts, but Singer's theory of animal rights never adds up to much more than an exhortation to universal benevolence. As ever, it's the practical examples that really make the argument, and there are at least some up-to-date horror stories of animal experimentation and factory farming. Committed animal liberationists won't find much use for it, but they could always give it to unconverted friends. (Jolyon Jenkins)

BIOGRAPHY

I feel petty . . .

Andrew Clements

Leonard Bernstein
JOAN PEYSER *Bantam* £14.95
Simon Rattle: The Making of a Conductor
NICHOLAS KENYON *Faber* £12.95

JOAN PEYSER SUCCEEDS in assembling round Bernstein the kind of destructive biography she attempted on Pierre Boulez ten years ago. Then, all the digging and delving she could muster failed to draw a bead on that intensely hermetic personality; as much is admitted in the title that she gave her book — *Boulez: Composer, Conductor, Enigma.* But little is allowed to remain enigmatic in her study of **Leonard Bernstein**; it charts a career lived out consciously in the full glare of a spotlight, that of a prodigiously gifted musician, the first great American-born conductor, who, from his earliest student days, has been his own best publicist.

The portrait she paints is that of a monster; egocentric, ruthlessly ambitious, personally cruel and — in Peyser's catechism seemingly worst of all — flagrantly homosexual. The twists and turns of Bernstein's sexuality dominate the book; every affair of substance is documented — no one should underestimate the unblinking thoroughness of Peyser's researches — and the sustained tone is of barely concealed distaste. It's hard to establish just what engages her moral disapproval most virulently: that his lifestyle did not hamper a superficially successful, indeed glamorous marriage; that his prodigal talents might ultimately have been spread too thin (so that the catalogue of works is more sporadic and uneven than it ought to have been); or that, however shabbily he may have treated his friends,

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he has continued to attract their loyalty, while the image of the larger-than-life, liberal populist has rarely been sullied.

For all her burrowings into the Bernstein psyche, however, Peyser has failed to get to grips with the real importance of this conductor-composer in the history of American music. The space given over to teasing out the relationship with a father who resisted the idea of music as a career, even when the evidence of his son's extraordinary gifts was staring everyone else in the face, and Bernstein's subsequent search for father figures among the conductors — Mitropoulos, Koussevitsky — who furthered his career, could have been used more usefully to fit the man into a musical as well as a social context. His rise to stardom, the first native to take over a major American orchestra, was part of the burgeoning of American music in the 1940s and '50s, when it came properly of age.

Peyser's discussion of Bernstein's own compositions is similarly thin; neither does she attempt to nail down the characteristics of his interpretations, save to retail their flamboyance of gesture. What musical discussion there is has its quota of errors: it's not true that Copland wrote only one work after the *Connotations* for orchestra, while the 'tone row' in Mozart's 40th Symphony occurs in the last movement, not the first.

That much of her narrative seems insistently readable only compounds its faults; with Bernstein's 70th birthday next year threatening a welter of celebratory studies, the sources Peyser has tapped could have provided the detailed and balanced biography a personality of Bernstein's complexity demands. Much of the material is no doubt here, but it is buried among the speculation and the innuendo.

Simon Rattle's talent may not be as instinctively self-advertising as Bernstein's, but his achievement at an age when many conductors are still content to be learning their trade is still immensely impressive. Whether the detail of that career yet justifies Nicholas Kenyon's biographical treatment is another matter. The author admits as much in his preface: 'It would be absurd to embark on the full panoply of an "official biography" of someone aged thirty-two whose work was only just beginning.' His solution is to offer what he calls a 'musical portrait rather than a star biography'.

Quite how a 'star biography' would have differed from what is served up here I'm not sure. The Rattle family album has been thoroughly plundered for snaps showing Simon at every age from a few months; every other page is larded with publicity shots. Interviews with colleagues make up the bulk of the text, laced with press cuttings from landmark concerts. There are some fascinating nuggets: comments by Rattle's teacher John Carewe are the most penetrating and do give a sense of how the raw talent has been shaped and directed. But the remainder seem aimed at building an image and, for a conductor who has consistently refused to assume the trappings of a conventional starry prima donna, it all seems very odd. □

FICTION

Too much to bear

Nick Caistor

Cuzcatlan
MANLIO ARGUETA trans. CLARK HANSEN *Chatto* £11.95

FOR A LONG TIME it seemed as though Manlio Argueta's *Cuzcatlan* would appear in an English language edition before it came out in its original Spanish. Argueta, who has lived outside his native El Salvador for over a decade, finds it extremely hard to have any of his books published there. Elsewhere in Central America, the publishing houses are in such poor economic shape that they are practically reduced to publishing only authors who pay to see themselves in print. In the event, however, Argueta did find a new publisher in Honduras, where a Spanish edition of 4,000 copies was launched a few months before this English version.

This not only reflects the situation of an exiled writer in Central America, but seems to me to have direct repercussions on the book. Cut off from his natural audience, Argueta has to imagine a public for himself, and is unsure how much he can take for granted at either the linguistic or the cultural level.

The pitfall is obvious: that of becoming over-simple or over-didactic, as the writer strives to inform a foreign audience how things are in his country, rather than being able to share with them feelings about experiences that have a common base.

Cuzcatlan does not entirely resolve this dilemma.

At times, as we read the details of the history of oppression which for centuries has beset the peasants of El Salvador, the ways in which they have been stripped of the land which was once theirs to become no more than migrant workers, producing first indigo for the European market, then coffee or cotton, also for export, the book creaks under the weight of its information. Argueta has a store of knowledge to transmit and occasionally seems only too aware that his is one of the few voices from El Salvador which can rescue its lived history from becoming simply news items.

In his previous novel, *One Day of Life*, Argueta avoided these dangers by focusing closely and faithfully on one peasant couple, reflecting the whole of the country's recent history of repression and revolt through their eyes. When in *Cuzcatlan* this same approach is extended back through four generations of the Martinez family, the effect becomes blurred.

The best of the novel comes in the anecdotes characteristic of peasant life: although he has been abroad for many years, Argueta has not lost the knack of convincingly portraying the speech and thoughts of El Salvador's country people. He is successful, too, in communicating the inevitable awakening of a sense of revolt against oppression in each generation and how this has grown to the present-day organised political challenge from the Farabundo Marti guerrillas.

As well as the seeds of rebellion, the Martinez family contains within itself the forces of oppression. Perhaps the most interesting character in the novel is Corporal Martinez, who finds himself, in the name of progress and of personal advancement, fighting his own people. The corporal, whose trial and judgment by his niece Beatriz form the book's dramatic finale, was also present in *One Day of Life*, and this continuation of characters and themes from one book to another suggests that Argueta is trying to fill out a broader canvas of El Salvador and its society in this century.

Despite the reservations expressed at the start of this review, Argueta's books do offer an irreplaceable testimony of the struggle in his country and in the rest of Central America to create freer and more just societies. □

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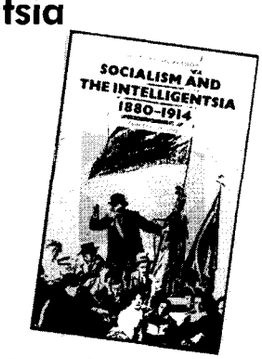

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Irish can of worms

Ruairi Quinn TD, Irish Labour Spokesperson, Environment & European Affairs, Dail Eireann, Dublin
As the Socialist International Official Delegate at the recent 17th Conference of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) which was held on 6-8 November, I find it distressing to say the least that the *New Statesman* remains so ill-informed from the point of view of the left with regards to the situation on the ground in Northern Ireland (*NS* 20 Nov.).

The SDLP is the only 'Left Party' in Northern Ireland that is recognised by the International Democratic Socialist movement. It has representation in the European Parliament, the House of Commons and in the local councils of Northern Ireland. In every democratic assembly which has been in existence in Northern Ireland since 1970 it has had a substantial and significant representation.

I would respectfully suggest that the real challenge for the British Labour Party is to examine ways in which it can strengthen and develop its links with a sister Party of the International in the full recognition of the very real sectarian and community identity problems which exist in the trade union and Labour movement in Northern Ireland. Tragically, to date most activity from the extreme left of the British Labour Party has been to provide a welcome and open hand to representatives of Sinn Fein.

It is inconceivable to many of us who live on this island south of the border that the British Labour Party, or some sections of it, should assign to the provisional IRA and Sinn Fein the heroic task of ending British colonialism in Ireland. To do so by reference to your own analysis involves the physical removal or elimination of a million people whose ancestors all arrived on the island of Ireland before the Mayflower even left Plymouth for New England!

The Anglo-Irish Agreement provides, for the first time since 1920, a Constitutional framework within which slow but steady progress can be made towards the evolution of an open and democratic system of local administration in Northern Ireland which would recognise the validity, without reservation, of both cultural and communal traditions, Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist within Northern Ireland. There simply is no alternative non-violent approach to this issue.

The real challenge for the British Labour Party is to continue to focus on that historic breakthrough of the Agreement and to demand of the British Government of the day a response in the operations in the Inter Governmental Conference which is as courageous and creative as their original signature to the Anglo-Irish Agreement itself.

Kevin Scally, Moseley, Birmingham
If Labour nominated candidates in the traditionally sectarian constituencies of Northern Ireland they would lose their deposits. The reason, of course, is that the people of Northern Ireland have *for generations* been divided into Catholic electors who, as everyone knows, will always vote against the Unionists, and Protestants who, as is equally well known, vote for sectarian loyalists like Ian Paisley.

What has sustained the IRA for the past 60 years and given it its grim determination was not so much the abstract ideal of a united Ireland, but the concrete injustice suffered by the Catholic minority at the hands of the Unionist majority.

Stephen Mulholland, Johannesburg, South Africa
I read with interest the balanced approach to the Irish problem put forward by John Lloyd and Ben Pimlott. I wonder why this commendable prescription of conciliation, reform and patience is not applied to your approach to the South African problem?

Bleak House blues

Charles Fyffe, London NW6
I have only just read the story about desk-top publishing with a mention of a style-checking program in a word-processor (*NS* 13 Nov.). That particular program seems to have more than just faulty taste. *My* copy of *Bleak House* begins 'London. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather.' I wonder what the program would have made of that?

Shady reference

Philip Gould, Co-convener, Shadow Communications Agency, London W1
In what was otherwise basically a full and accurate account of the research presentation made to the NEC and Shadow Cabinet (*NS* 4 Dec.) John Rentoul and Jane Ratford made a reference to my own role in the presentation which was wrong.

Like all the other volunteers in the Shadow Communications Agency — 200 in all, in the last two years — I am completely dedicated to the Labour Party, but my professional contribution is limited entirely to helping (jointly with Deborah Mattinson) organise the communications and research expertise available to the Party.

It does not, nor could not, extend to changing 'the product', as the authors put it, let alone finding solutions to Labour's problems: that is for the Labour Party alone to undertake. If I do have a personal role to play, it is contributing through the channels available to any other Labour Party member. In my case, through attendance at Ward Meetings of Westminster North CLP.

Anthony Mitchell, Shrewsbury
In looking at why, despite widespread support for individual Labour policies, the Tories still won the election, John Rentoul and Jane Ratford (*NS* 4 Dec.) conclude that 'The party can't blame social changes entirely, it must also blame itself. Or . . . the *product*.' There is a far more important factor which Rentoul and Ratford do not mention, and which is rarely addressed by anyone, probably because it is so difficult to remedy. Yet the evidence for this factor, which the writers ignore even if they noticed it, is clearly implicit in all three of the Labour defectors' attitudes quoted by them.

The third complained of *'all this talk* about gay rights' which 'Livingstone and Labour are pushing . . . far too much'; the second recited '(the secret ballot) has given the unions back to their members'. The first, believing that Kinnock 'doesn't seem able to control the party', added, 'At least, that's the way it's given to us by the media.' Aye, there's the rub!

The problem isn't only that virtually the entire press is pledged to the Tories. Or that the biggest-selling papers keep up daily a relentless campaign of invention, distortion, deception and plain propaganda. but they set the agenda for the broadcast media, which, erroneously seen to be balanced and objective, shapes attitudes even more insidiously. The reality is not that Labour gives top priority to incessant talk about gay rights, even less that it indoctrinates schoolchildren into compulsory homosexuality, the line often pushed by the Murdochs of this world. The media image of the party, however, has clearly succeeded in ousting the reality from people's consciousness, because image is all, and it is created wholly by the media.

Similarly, can we believe that an ordinary person is likely independently to conjure up in her/his own mind the phrase, or slogan, 'giving the unions back to their members' without the prompting of constant repetition on TV and in the press? Why do people commonly believe all sorts of myths about so-called loony-left councils? Because these myths are purveyed by the gamut of *news*- papers from the soft-porn rags to the self-styled 'quality' press. Why are people's views of the Tories not coloured by images of the 'looniness' of extreme right-wing local and central government policies? Because these are not so portrayed in the printed media, from which TV and radio take their cue.

No matter if Labour have all the winning policies: if people are not convinced of their rightness, Labour will not win. And if, no matter what the policies actually *are*, the media convince people that they are otherwise, then Labour *cannot* win.

NHS — a suggestion

Gareth Strangemore, Penarth, South Glamorgan
Considering the expense of training doctors and nurses through the NHS and the subsequent 'brain drain' to the private sector, the NHS and therefore the British taxpayer must lose a considerable sum of money. On top of that, private doctors and hospitals only go on to make their profits because of the standards of training received. Why then could they not be forced to fill their empty beds (*NS* 20 Nov.) with non-paying patients who have had to wait for NHS treatment because of loss of staff and funding? This could reasonably be enforced bearing in mind the amount they have extracted from the NHS by poaching trained staff.
Further, can anyone tell me the approximate cost of training the doctors and nurses who are lost to the private sector? Armed with this figure, the private sector could be asked either to reimburse this sum or to provide an equivalent in treatment to the NHS. ▷

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Stroking Labour's new media policy

Mark Fisher MP, House of Commons, London SW1

Denis MacShane berates the Labour Party for having no media policy (*NS* 20 Nov.). He is wrong. Labour fought the last election with an integrated arts and media policy entitled *Voices and Choices (May 1987)* which recognised the key role of the media industries in our economic and cultural life.

It proposed a unified Ministry of Arts and Media, responsible for the press, both regional and national, the film and record industries, design, fashion and architecture, and a shared responsibility for broadcasting with the Home Office in which the developments of and access to radio and television (community radio, cable and satellite, 5th Channel, independent producers' access, etc).

Mrs Thatcher's government has done great damage to our media and our culture. They did not hesitate to sanction a police raid on the BBC Glasgow offices to confiscate the Zircon tapes; they have not even attempted to constrain those multi-media corporations like News International who are buying up our culture, whether through newspapers, television, satellite, publishing houses and now newsagents, retail and wholesale. Next year they will introduce Broadcasting Bills which are likely to deregulate and perhaps break up broadcasting.

There are practical steps that the next Labour government can take to address these problems. We are learning from foreign legislation about how to limit concentration of ownership; in wholesale and retail, as well as in production; the right to distribute and the right to reply; how to ensure diversity of local voices through community radio networks and to positively promote equal opportunities for employment, voice and representation.

Labour is developing specific policy in discussion group on newspapers, radio and television and the media will feature in at least three of the policy review groups. Meanwhile Labour local authorities are recognising the key role that the media play in their local economies and culture. The North East Training Centre has been established in Gateshead with local authority backing and Birmingham have had an important survey completed for them by Comedia on the future of the audio-visual industries. If he looked at what is actually happening today in the Labour Party, there is much for Denis MacShane to support.

Joe Ashton MP, House of Commons, London SW1

Forty-five thousand quid for a weekly column! I thought the *New Statesman* was supposed to have a reputation for accuracy not hype. Denis MacShane must have been reading about football transfers when he wrote that blokes like me refuse to change a system which 'strokes and feeds us so well', and reckons that's why Labour has no media policy. Actually I am still trying to fathom out why Express newspapers fed me for eight years for a twice weekly column bashing Mrs Thatcher but we'll let that pass.

The real reason Labour doesn't have a policy is because the trade unions just don't bother to send media resolutions to the Party Conference, and the NUJ won't even affiliate. Humble backbenchers like me aren't allowed to make policy. We are merely lobby fodder in the parliamentary infantry. I don't even get asked to sit on any party committees in case I might try to turn the mountains of constipated bumf into tabloid politics. Every single influential party voice is convinced that the way to win elections is by appealing to the 2 million readers of the *Guardian* and *Independent* and not the 20 million who read the *Mirror, Sun* and *Star*. So I just let'em get on with it and write for the 9 million readers of the *People* instead.

All I ever got from the readers and party members when I wrote 'for nowt' in *Labour Weekly* were moans and groans and shrill demands from the women's sections that I ought to be gelded. I'd sooner be fed.

The new party

Hannan Rose, Editor, The Radical Quarterly

Sarah Benton gets much right in her analysis of Liberal concerns about the constitution emerging for the new party (*NS* 4 Dec.) but she puts too much emphasis on one issue — powers for the English regions — and underestimates the strength of feeling in the party.

First, there is still a degree of unfamiliarity with the Liberal Party which leads to some over-simplification ('totem activist', 'symbolic radical', 'party strongman'). We hope dialogue in the *NS* will overcome this but the problem is compounded by a second factor — the Liberal Party does not have organised, rigid factions whose votes can be counted in advance; rather there is a whole range of overlapping networks. These proceed — and this is the third problem for any commentator — by communication, discussion and argument. That is not an accident of 'the opportunities of the last 20 years' (Ms Benton) but a reflection of 'the wisdom of John Stuart Mill' — his stress on the individual's responsibility to participate actively in the affairs of his or her various communities. And it is the key to current concerns within the Party.

Party Council at York did not reflect a small minority of the membership but was representative of the whole breadth of it. In a series of factors it saw the danger of a party controlled from the top, inhibiting participation. Power in unaccountable central committees with restricted representative bodies would encourage the formation of the factions which have so far been avoided with, for example, slates for elections and the outcome of debates known hours before the arguments have been heard.

The worries go deeper still. Leaders cannot denigrate 'activists' in one breath and call upon them to turn out for by-elections in the next. It is not sensible to proceed by attempting to stifle those who are in fact the motor of the movement. Gladstone castigated the Tories for 'fear of the people' and characterised Liberalism as having 'trust in the people'; we must base our new party on the principles we advocate for the country as a whole — a belief in open debate and the encouragement of active participation. These are feelings shared by all sections of the Liberal Party, however characterised, and they account for the depth and breadth of anxiety about the new party.

Ah! Poor Rob

W. McMillan, Director of Information Services, UKAEA, London SW1

Rob Edwards feigns surprise that he is unloved by the nuclear industry (*NS* 26 Nov.). He has for many years been open and strident in his opposition to the industry, wearing both his CND and journalist's hats.

Despite this the UKAEA has been co-operative and helpful to him and the TV programmes with which he has been associated. He omits to mention his three days of filming at Dounreay and top-level interviews for his Channel Four TV programme or his many previous visits to Dounreay and our other labs.

What *does* worry us is that the BBC and ITV/C4 companies, disregarding their own rules for balance often (unwittingly?) rely only on people committed to one side of controversial issues in the researching, structuring (who to include, who to ignore) and production of programmes. Rob Edwards as a nuclear programme contributor or interviewer — yes. But as a producer/presenter charged with giving balanced information?!!

Opportunity knocks for poets

Andrew Motion, Chatto & Windus, 30 Bedford Square, London WC1 3RP

In the spring of 1989 Chatto & Windus hope to publish the second volume of the New Chatto Poets series. Anyone wishing to have their work considered for inclusion should send it to me before 31 March 1988. Submissions should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

Help for History

Ken Coates & Tony Topham, TGWU History: University of Nottingham, Department of Adult Education, 14-22 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham NG1 4FJ

We are now beginning work on a very important project, to prepare a full history of the Transport and General Workers' Union, from the days of its foundation down to the present Secretary, Ron Todd, and the Executive Officers. It will be conducted under the auspices of the University of Nottingham, which has received a grant from the Leverhulme Trust to support the work.

Naturally, we are very anxious to hear from members and retired members of the Union, and from other people who have had dealings with the Union in the past. We should be very grateful for the loan of relevant papers or photographs. We should also like to know of the whereabouts of people who may be willing to be interviewed. At a later stage, we shall be arranging for a number of consultations concerning different sectors of the Union's work. Meantime, we should be grateful for advice and opinions about how the project should be developed.

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Weekend competition

No 3005 **Set by Margaret Rogers**

Could we please have portraits of the typical *NS* reader? Max. 120 words — or, if in verse, 12 lines — by 23 December. (Sorry: the pre-Christmas strain is showing. We called the comp that we set last week No 3044. It should, of course, have been No 3004.)

No 3002 **Set by Margaret Rogers**

Laments for yuppy victims of the Crash, modelled on either Brooke's 'The Soldier' or Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'.

Report **By Rosie Hughes**

I can't believe it: you get better and better. *What* an armful of lovelies you are. And C.J.D. Doyle almost made we weep with his thankyou letter for last month's prize — someone *did* bring you up deliciously, my treasure; I'm only sorry you haven't won this week. But a Special Mention to you, and to Lydia Shaxberd, M.E. Ault, Naomi Marks, A.D. Gibbons, Peter Alexander, Will Bellenger, Cynthia Hall, John Farnon, George Moor, Basil Ransome-Davies, Eric Swainson and Gerard Benson. Twelve pounds a head to those below.

What tribute for the boys who lost their Porsches?
Only the sad statistics of the News;
Only the comments, confident or cautious,
Of City experts' contradicting views.
No sympathy for them, no word of praise,
Nor any relic save the mocking screen
Which used to promise profitable days
And failed to warn of perils unforeseen.

What dirges shall be sung to mourn their fate?
Not the dull columns of the daily press,
But the Back Pages of our own *NS*
Lament in halting verse their wretched state.
The *FT* Index rose — they played their part;
It sank — and they were driven to depart.

JOHN MARRIOTT

What sobs and tears for those whose hopes are shattered?
Only the screech of tyres on tarmac strips
As Porsches are reclaimed and pages scattered
From Filofaxes thrown in rubbish skips.
As mortgages forclose no pity's shown,
As overdrafts are frozen, then called in —
The shrill demented cry of the cellnet 'phone,
A banshee wailing through the city din.

What comfort may be offered to them all?
Only the burst of bubbles in their eyes
From champagne glasses, cushioning their fall.
No longer wealthy, now, too late, they're wise.
As bottles empty fast, the senses numb.
Don't think, just drink, tomorrow may not come.

KATIE MALLETT

If I should crash, think only this of me:
That there's some yuppy in a pauper's field
That once made cash for England. There shall be
In that poor earth a Midas heart concealed,
A heart the City bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave once its gold to love, its banks to roam,
A creature of London's, breathing London air,
High with coke, portfolio for home.
And think, this heart, all money shed away,
A drop in the eternal Graph, no less,
Gives somewhere back the goods by London given,
The Porsche, the flat; dreams golden as her day;
And arrogance of wealth; now penniless —
Sunday so high. Black Monday kicked from heaven.

T. GRIFFITHS

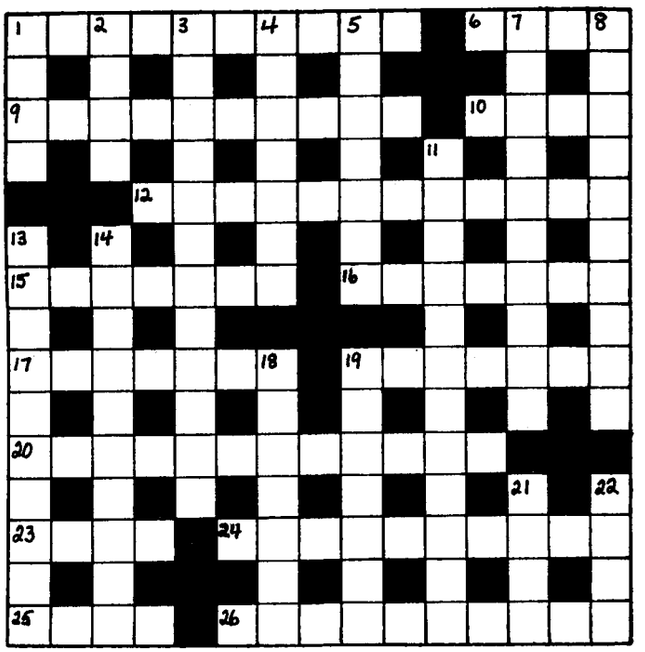
What passing bells for those who were too bullish?
Only the calculator's rapid clatter,
The popping corks of those who were less foolish,
The flowing tide of City wine-bar chatter.
Battalions of eager beavers wait
For Hang Seng and Dow Jones slowly to pick up.
What care they for their predecessors' fate?
The Market lumbers on with scarce a hiccup.

And those that fell, their Porsches flogged to yobs,
Their dockland flats for sale at knock-down prices,
What can they do to ease their cash-flow crisis
But tramp the streets in search of proper jobs?
Each dusk, they contemplate the old, old lie:
There's heaps of work about for those that try.

PETER NORMAN

Weekend Crossword 1580

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1580, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by first post 4 January.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

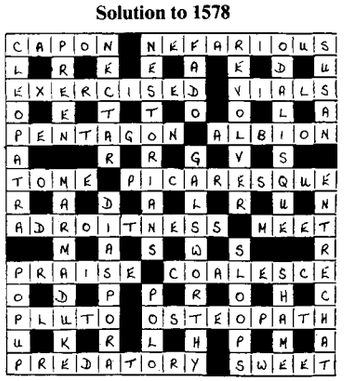
1. Seemingly make a request about payment (10)
6. Dress for return game (4)
9. Do nothing certain when blended to produce harmony (10)
10. Part of building where animal loses its tail (4)
12. Badger about going straight ahead in play (8,4)
15. Sat curled up in a container to practise self-control (7)
16. Though fat, I am prepared to be photographed on the commercial (7)
17. Harmful substance to obtain from woollen fabric (7)
19. Stop an occasion meant to appeal to the public (7)
20. Position of responsibility which gives honour to part of a flying man's body (12)
23. Place for a woman outside the circle (4)
24. Expect one to appear before the head after a caper (10)
25. Back in the Embassy others indulged in trifles (4)
26. Criminals set up a means of concealment in a back street (10)

DOWN

1. A kind of Christian love for a musician (4)
2. Bear down when the band is up (4)
3. She was one of his subjects (5,7)
4. Figure which shows that a horse is in time (7)
5. A title one used for a woman (7)
7. One interested in stars makes star role go crazy (10)
8. Be without a man in spa or suburb of London (10)
11. Racism shows it is man being wrong about the backwardness of the age (12)
13. Skill needed by sailor with one ship (10)
14. Royal scout appears to be showing signs of affection (10)
18. I follow an artist in putting payment up for the instructor (7)
19. Thrashing gives old man an unpleasant sensation (7)
21. Blind players? (4)
22. Observes parts of Church (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1578



Prizewinners to 1578

R. F. Jones
(Berrynarbor, N. Devon)
Enid Barford
(London SW19)
Mr Naresh Chandra
(New Delhi, India)

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Take me to your Leader
by Moanin' Minnie
10-12
OFF YER BUMS, YOU MANGEY HATSTANDS— WE'VE GOT PARCELS TO LOAD UP
HO HO HO
LOOK OUT— HERE'S THE BOSS
WHAT ARE YOU DELIVERING— SUPPLIES TO ETHIOPIA?
??
NOT BLOODY LIKELY MATE. WE DID THAT LAST TIME, AND WHAT HAPPENS?— THEY GO AND HAVE ANOTHER BLOODY FAMINE. IF WE GIVE THEM MORE THEY'LL GO HAVING FAMINES EVERY BLOODY YEAR
BUT SURELY— IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS... I MEAN, THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST...
JESUS CHRIST?
JOHN MINNION
IF JESUS CHRIST WANTED THE POOR TO HAVE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS HE WOULD HAVE GIVEN THEM ALL PILLOW CASES. HO HO HO.

Chess

NIGEL SHORT has produced a curious mixture of results in 1987. Among the triumphs — overwhelming the field at Reykjavik, winning the British championship with some ease, and marching into the candidates' matches — there was that lowly placing in the SWIFT tournament, where he was made to look like a pretty ordinary GM. Those hoping that Nigel will emerge as a world title challenger had to dismiss this as an isolated aberration. Unfortunately, he's had another one in the Investabanka tournament in Belgrade. The final scores there (out of 11) were: Ljubojevic 8; Timman 7½; Beliavsky 7; Korchnoi, Nikolic and Popovic 6; Hjartarson, Ivanovic and Short 5; Gligoric and Salov 4½; and Marjanovic 1½. It's little comfort that Hjartarson and Salov (both candidates) were also under 50 per cent. Short lost 5 games in Belgrade. Surely potential world champions shouldn't be so beatable.

On their record this year, Lubomir Ljubojevic and Nigel Short are like opposite ends of a see-saw — when one is up, the other has to be down. Short's failures have been the scenes of the Yugoslav GM's victories, as in Belgrade, and also at the SWIFT in Brussels, where he tied for first place with Kasparov. But in the world championship process it was Ljubojevic who was dumped out of contention because of a poor performance at the interzonal level.

In fact, Ljubojevic has never qualified for the candidates' matches, in spite of a consistently high world-ranking based on tournament results. Now 37 (I see he was born in Belgrade on 2 November 1950) and having been a GM since 1971, Ljubo has probably grown out of any aspirations to become world champion. But he might yet become *world tournament champion*, as the grand prix that the Grandmasters Association plans to introduce next year should suit him nicely.

I believe that 'Lubomir' means 'peace-loving'. In this case the name is inversely appropriate, much as 'Little John' once was. Ljubo always affected a *macho* manner and now, on the threshold of middle-age, has developed an irritating habit of addressing younger colleagues as 'boy'. However, it cannot be denied that there is an authentic power to his chess, most spectacularly displayed in the following game, which was played at County Hall in the **Phillips & Drew Kings**, the first of the biennial London tournaments.

Sax-Ljubojevic, London 1980. Sicilian Defence.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. c3 d5 4. e5 Can White transpose into an Advance French by following up with d2-d4? Black's next is in itself the answer, **d4! 5. Bd3**. White can play to win a pawn with 5. cxd4 cxd4 6. Bb5+ Nc6 7. Bxc6+ 8. Qa4, but variations such as 8 . . . Bc5 9. Qxc6+ Bd7 10. Qxc5 Rc8 show that it's too risky. **Nc6 6. Qe2 Nge7 7. 0-0 Ng6 8. Qe4 Be7** The d4 pawn is making the development of White's Q-side very difficult. **9. Na3 0-0 10. cxd4 cxd4 11. Nc2 Qc7**. At this stage White would have been advised to settle for nursing an isolated d-pawn after 12. Ncxd4 Ncxe5 13. Nxe5 Qxe5 14. Nf3. **12. Re1 Rd8** The d4 pawn is tactically defended, since 13. Ncxd4 Nxd4 14. Nxd4 Qd7 drops a piece. **13. h4 h5 14. g4?** I suspect it is Sax's earlier play, in particular his 4th, that deserves to be marked as dubious. The thrust with the g-pawn ends in disaster, but only because Ljubo finds an inspired rejoinder. **hxg4 15. h5**. Here Sax was reckoning on 15 . . . Nf8 16. Qxg4 with the makings of a K-side attack for White. **Ncxe5!! 16. Nxe5 f5! 17. Qe2 Nf4 18. Qf1**. If you can find a better hole . . . **b5! 0-1**. In spite of having all his pieces still on the board White is completely helpless against the threats of . . . Bb7, . . . Bd6 and . . . Nh3+.

Are there any other games between modern grandmasters in which White has been so swiftly and so utterly destroyed? A famous example was the 17-mover Larsen lost to Spassky in the *USSR v Rest of the World* match of 1970. And now I come to think of it, there is another example that should be mentioned, from the Las Palmas tournament in 1973:

1. b3 e5 2. Bb2 d6 3. e3 Nf6 4. c4 g6 5. d4 Bg7 6. Nc3 exd4 7. Qxd4 0-0 8. Nf3 Nbd7 9. Be2 Nc5 10. Rd1? Careless to leave the Queen exposed along the diagonal like this? It seems to be done for the sake of a crude little trap: 10 . . . Nfe4? 11. Qxg7+ Kxg7 12. Nxe4+ and 13. Nxc5. **Ng4! 11. Qd2** 11. Qf4 is some improvement, although after 11 . . . f5! it is difficult to see how White can cope with the threat of 12 . . . Ne4. **Nxf2!** At this point White was unable to see any sensible way of continuing the struggle (12. Kxf2 Bxc3 and 13. Qc1 is forced), and therefore jettisoned material with **12. 0-0 Nxd1 13. Bxd1**. Black, who was Leonid Stein, still won in 25 moves. And the identity of the loser? Yes, it was Ljubomir Ljubojevic, aged 22 (just as Short is now), learning the hard way. But I don't think the likes of Capablanca, Fischer, Karpov and Kasparov ever needed to be taught that sort of lesson.

George Botterill

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This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please.)

☐ The Rys has a whole arsenal of starting cannon: four small ones firing 10-bore blank cartridges each have a firearms certificate and are kept in a secure place, and the 22 larger cannon on the seafront, used for saluting the Queen with black powder and wadding when she visits Cowes Week, all have a shotgun certificate. — *The Times* (M. Lintott)

☐ A miniature gold-plated wheel clamp holding a bottle of one of the world's finest cognacs is being sold by Harrods as the ultimate Christmas present. It costs £6600. — *Glasgow Herald* (Alison Prince)

☐ From time to time we have occasion to commission specialist reports on decay and wood-borers in church timbers. On several occasions, and from more than one firm, these reports refer to 'knaves' and 'Isles'. *The Times* (Leonard Cox)

☐ Judges at the High Court are subjecting litigious yuppies to the gravest of humiliations. The latest of these is a ban on portable telephones in all the courtrooms. But, tragically, many yuppies are unable to do without these, the barest of life's bare necessities, and are smuggling the devices in. A yuppie who is caught out (this tends to happen when somebody rings one up) now risks a heavy fine for contempt of court. —*Observer* (Liselotte Leschke)

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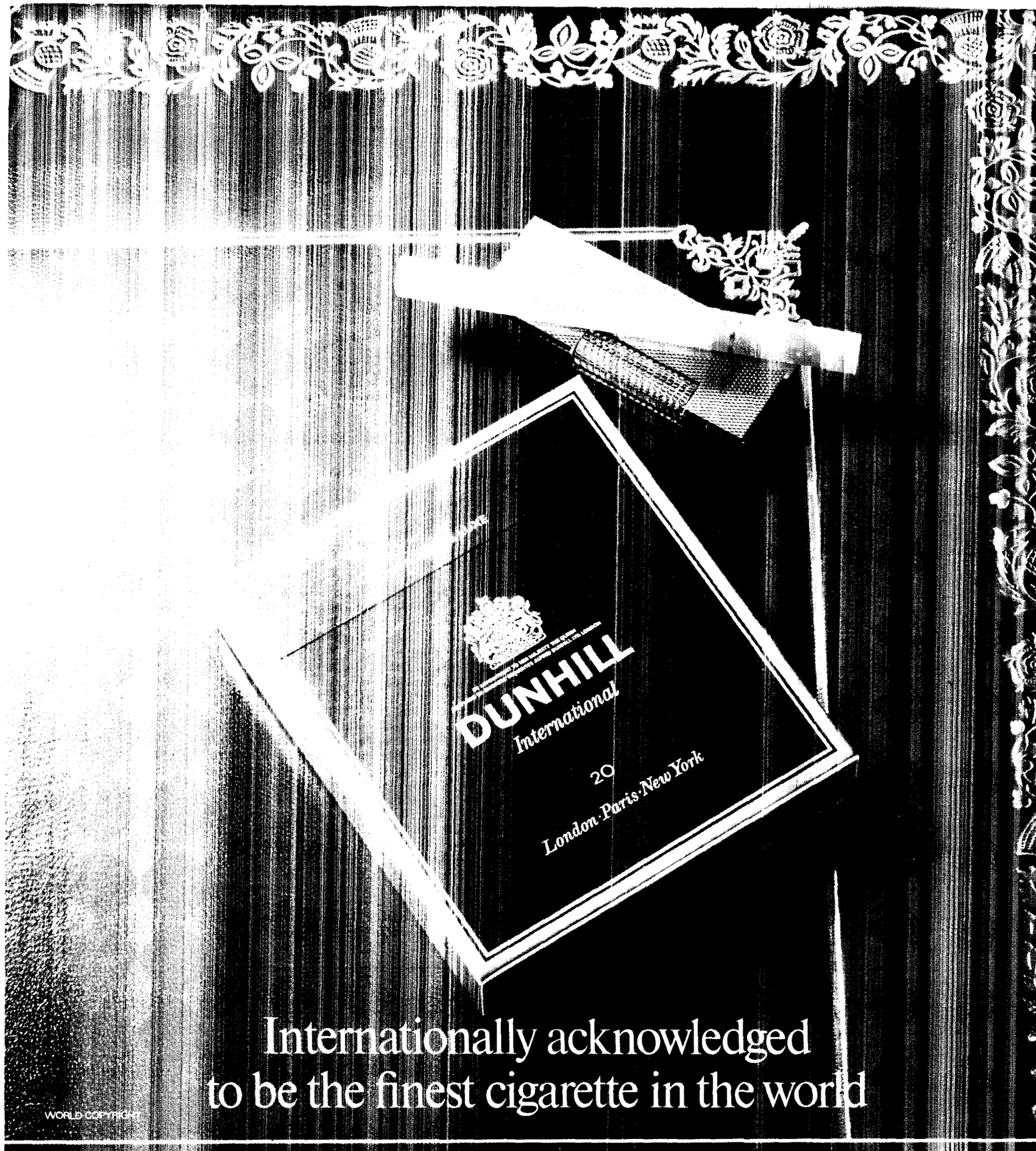

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